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P.25

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FEATURES

68 FAMILY GUY

The most irreverent, offensive and—oh yeah—funny cartoon on the air was dumped by Fox—and then un-dumped after fans bought three million copies of the show's DVDs. Creator Seth MacFarlane discusses showbiz, alcoholism and some guy named Homer.

76 THE KILLERS

They're good-looking, pals with Bono and Bowie, regularly besieged by armies of screaming hotties and have become one of the biggest acts in the world virtually overnight. And Brandon Flowers doesn't understand why people hate them.

82 ROCK & ROLL KNOW-IT-ALL #2: DRUGS!

It might surprise you to learn that certain musicians have, from time to time, experimented with illegal narcotics. Get a blow-by-blow account of all the high times with our mind-expanding history of drug use by your favorite rockers and rappers.

88 FERGIE

The beauty of the Black Eyed Peas was a wholesome child actor who grew into a drug-abusing teen gangbanger. Now she's found contentment as a hugely successful performer, a worldwide sex symbol and a "non-practicing slut."

92 \$848 WITH THE ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS

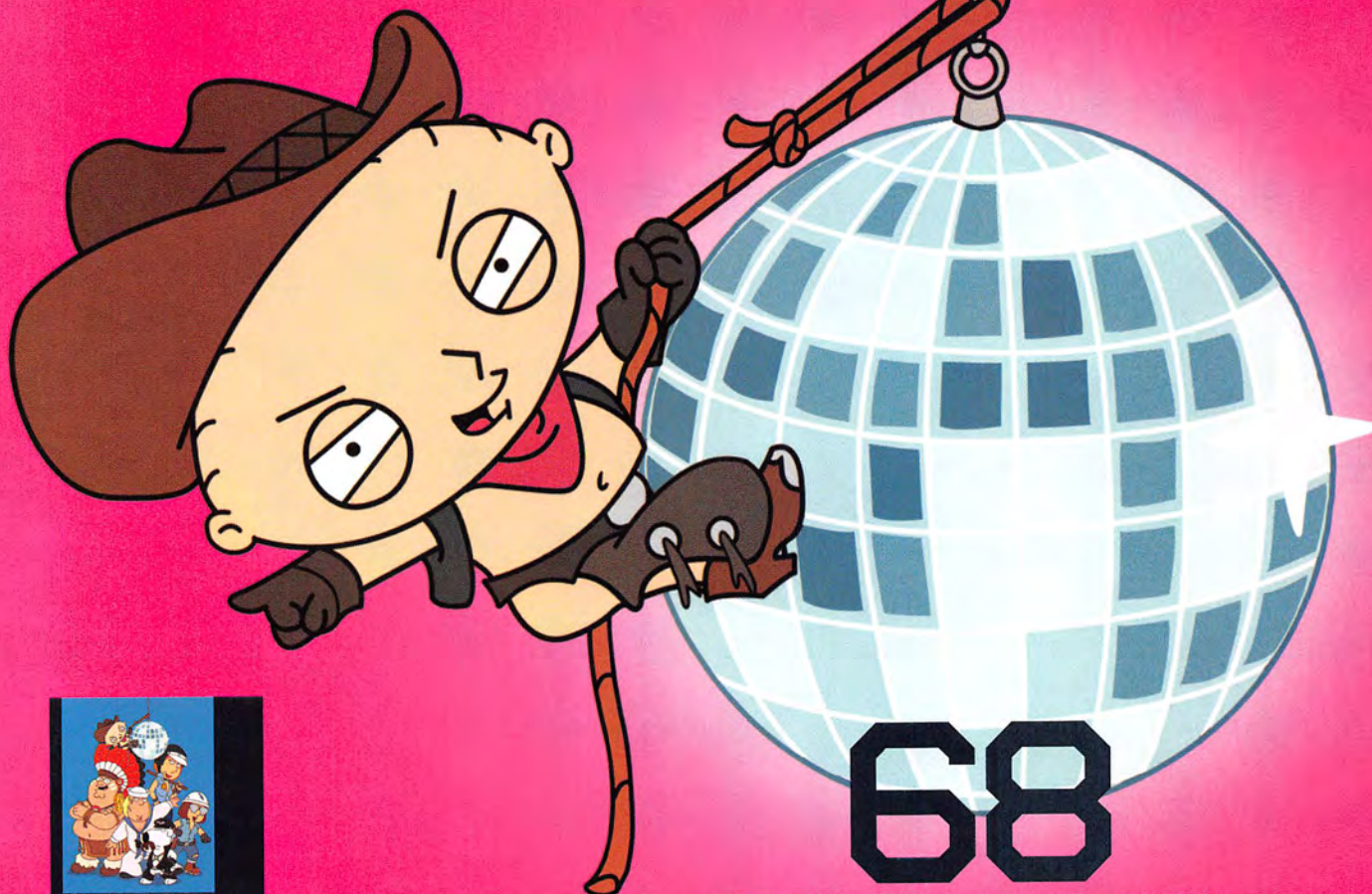
The Oklahoma rockers getteth their geek on with codpieces, broadswords and "fruity" elven rings, all on *Blender's* dime.

96 PLAY BALL!

Major-league baseballers are known for the songs they choose to play before their at-bats, but whose playlist rocks the hardest? Meet *Blender's* rock & roll dream team.

100 MY BODYGUARD

Bodyguards are big guys who protect celebrities. Music journalists are cavern-chested whelps who can barely pick up their pens. So who in their right mind would hire a *Blender* writer as a bodyguard?



ON THE COVER

FAMILY GUY

ILLUSTRATION EXCLUSIVELY FOR BLENDER, COURTESY 20TH CENTURY FOX TELEVISION. COVER INSET: JACK WHITE: PATRICK KEELER. SPINE: ANNE BANCROFT: EVERETT COLLECTION

"MY MOM HAD A VERY **DARK, TWISTED, SICK** SENSE OF HUMOR."

FAMILY GUY CREATOR SETH MACFARLANE

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a grey sweater and jeans, is holding a Go Phone in its clear plastic packaging. The background is a solid orange color. The packaging is circular with a blue and orange design. The phone is silver and has the Cingular logo on its screen.

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MRAZ THINK HE IS?
The Virginia rocker loves
smoking, dropping dope rhymes
and the word "fucktard."
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Kid Rock takes a jaunty
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malfunction and Jimi's
ghost gives guitar lessons.
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Tony Yayo; Antigone Rising

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switched formats? Blame that
rap-rock band you used to like.
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The pot-huffing matchbox
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"ENTER SANDMAN"
Like most everything Metallica
does, the crafting of their
signature hit was fraught with
tension, conflict and agonizing
self-examination. And pictures
of dicks.
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CILLIAN MURPHY
This Irish heartthrob loves
Stevie Wonder and Frank Zappa
and hates "diluted rock music."
- 66 ASK BLENDER
This month: The Plasmatics,
Chuck Berry, Grandmaster
Flash and Eels.



76

"WE'RE VERY OLD-FASHIONED,
AND THE WORLD ISN'T." BRANDON FLOWERS OF THE HILLERS

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2002: DRUG DEALERS **WEEP** WHEN SNOOP DOGG
ANNOUNCES HE HAS QUIT **SMOKING POT.**


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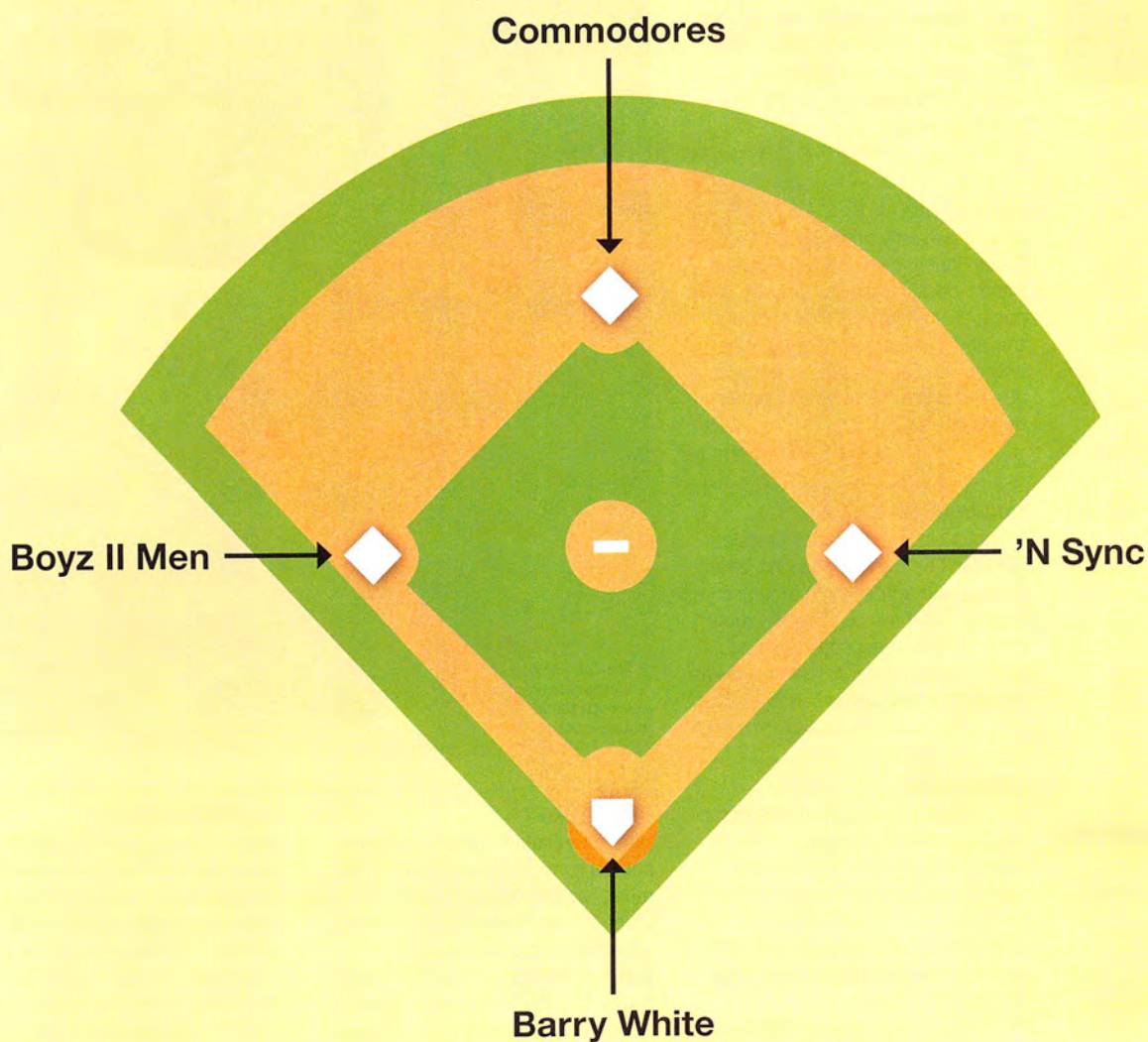
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MITCH MISSED

Kudos for memorializing Mitch Hedberg on *Blender's* spine last month. He may not have been a musician, but he was one hell of a funny guy. Also, reading your "Double Date" feature, I couldn't help wondering if Shooter Jennings deliberately dressed himself up as Mitch in tribute, as from where I'm sitting they could be twins.

LAWRENCE PEARL, WEST LAKE, OH

BRUUUUUUUUUCE

What a perfectly timed quote from Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's classic "Rosalita" on your back page: "Someday we'll look back on this and it will all seem funny." Not only could I use the advice, but you also reminded me to go pick up his new one!

JESSE LEVY, HIGHLAND PARK, NJ

LANGUAGE NO BARRIER

I'm not a big fan of Shakira's music. But I can't be the only one who, after reading your article, came to the conclusion that she is considerably more eloquent than most pop stars who have English as their first language—as opposed to their second, or even third.

ROB KLAGBRUN, PITTSBURGH

DOING LINES

The next time you guys decide to run a feature in which someone hits on women using song lyrics ["Hello, I Love You . . ."], would you consider letting me do it? I spend most of my spare time creeping out women in bars anyway—it would be nice to get paid for it for once.

MARC FREITAG, WALNUT CREEK, CA

CONGRATULATIONS TO ROBERT GLOVER OF MADISON, TN, WINNER OF *BLENDER'S* JULY CROSSWORD CONTEST, WHO SCORED A BELKIN PURE AV REMOTE TV.

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WIN ME!



Shakira: Keeping abreast of current events. Get it? Abreast? Current?

OH, THE IRONY!

I was interested to read that the new pope is concerned about such "devil music" as Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones. Thank heavens the Catholic church has no problems of its own that would distract him from concentrating fully on this supposed "evil."

CINDI BRENT, WEST BABYLON, NY

HUMORISTIC!

Well done: I really enjoyed the Shakira article. Your writer Rob Tannenbaum is more correct than he knows when he says that Shakira is "not only willful but also smart." In fact she's smarter than Mr. Tannenbaum, whose assertion that *humoristic* isn't a word is untrue.

KURT LAPELLE, YOUNGSTOWN, OH

You know, you're absolutely right. But was that a double negative in your last sentence?

DAVE GROHL ABIDES

After reading your Foo Fighters piece, I realized that Dave Grohl and Jeff Bridges' Dude character in *The Big Lebowski* are the same person! Think about it: They both like bowling, they both hate the Eagles and they're both fairly familiar with narcotics. And why haven't they ever been seen together in the same place?

COLLEEN MAESON, SOUTH PLAINFIELD, NJ

Because . . . look, we're just not going to get into this, OK?

CUTE AND POINTLESS

Can I respectfully suggest that Kimberly Stewart's description of her rhinestone-covered iPod—"cute and pointless"—might also be considered a fairly accurate description of her?

SHANNON HAMELIN, OZONE, AR

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Kimberly Stewart:
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SEXUALLY UNSATISFIED

I feel really envious of Jeph Howard from the Used's girlfriend if he needs an entire pineapple to cover his privates. Most of the guys I go out with could achieve the same result with a fig.

VERONICA ANDRESEN, FITCHBURG, MA

FIGHT CLUBBER

I always thought that the recovery group-obsessed character of Marla from *Fight Club* was just another crazy figment of Chuck Palahniuk's imagination. But after reading about how Kimberly Stewart attends AA meetings even though she's not an alcoholic, and that her favorite show is called *Intervention*, I'm not so sure.

CAT GAILE, NEWBERRY, SC

KURT GREETING

The more I think about the fact that visitors to Kurt Cobain's hometown of Aberdeen, Washington, are greeted with a sign that reads "Come As You Are," the more confused I get. I mean, who at that point is going to bother to stop and change?

TOM SHUTTS, OSPREY, FL

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EVERY ROSIE HAS ITS THORN

Where the hell was Rosie Perez on your so-called list of "Latina Bombshells"? Come on! Her dance at the start of *Do the Right Thing* is easily as hot as anything Charo or Raquel Welch have ever done.

RUSSELL SANTIAGO, NEW YORK CITY

BIZARRE!

Do you think if everyone in America signed a petition saying that D12 member and lard-ass Bizarre really is "bizarre," he would put his shirt back on? If so, I would be more than happy to organize that.

MARTIN BEMIS, WESTPORT, CT

Dude, he's just big-boned is all.

THROBBING VEINS

Anyone who enjoyed your "Rock's Worst Dads" feature as much as I did might like to check out the Web site of cartoonist Peter Bagge (peterbagge.com), which includes four animated shorts featuring Murry (father of Brian) Wilson in all his vein-throbbing glory.

DARREN WEINSTEIN, TAHOE CITY, CA

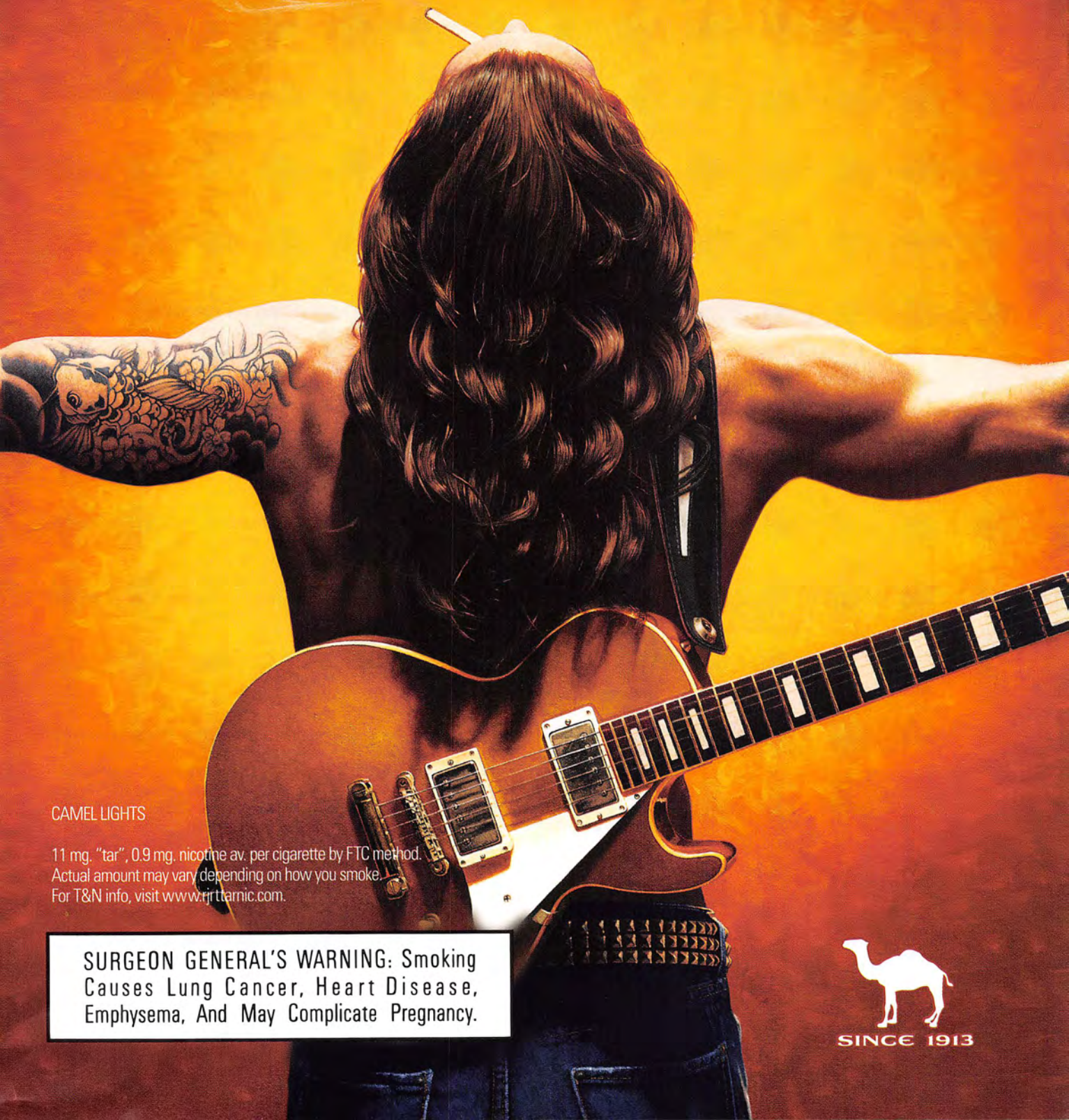
YOUR MOVE

Am I the only *Blender* subscriber who is getting more and more excited about your chess game against pop stars? It's now the first thing that I turn to after I get my copy.

CARA PAYNE, PLATTSBURGH, NY

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SINCE 1913



Interpol: Not getting any more tan.



You're gonna regret this someday: a reader's Def Leppard tattoo.

GETTING THE SKINNY

A hundred thanks for your "Rock & Roll Know-It-All: New Wave" feature—which is roughly the number of great New Wave tracks I now own, having followed your recommendations and bought CDs by the Pretenders, Franz Ferdinand, XTC, the Strokes and Hot Hot Heat.

TODD HECKSCHER, KISSIMMEE, FL

DIAMONDS ARE FOR NEVER

So Young Gunz say that one of the most important things about shopping for a diamond is that "you gotta spend that real money if you want that real ice." Good point. But nowhere in the piece do they explain how the hell we're supposed to get the "real money" in the first place. Would they care to give me some of theirs?

BEN THOMASEN, WOODBRIDGE, NJ

PURE TORTURE

I've been a subscriber for as long as you've been in print and love your mag. I'm wondering why you would torture me, a world music fan, and list the five essential favela tracks but no links to listen to or buy them??

SHANELLE KING, VIA E-MAIL

#1 LEP FAN

In the review of the Def Leppard collection *Rock of Ages*, I noticed you said it has two new tracks on the greatest hits package, "Work It Out" and a Badfinger cover ("No Matter What"). For your info, "Work It Out" came off the *Slang* album from 1996. Which, in my opinion, is a masterpiece right next to *Hysteria*. (Attached is my tattoo of *Hysteria*.)

CHAD OPLIGER, COLUMBUS, NE

#1 OLDEST READER

I'm 87 years old, walk with a cane and sing in a monotone. But I have a subscription to *Blender*, read it cover to cover every month, and learn a lot. Are there any other readers out there like me?

CELIA PUFFER, WINCHESTER, MA

You mean, other than the editors' grandmothers? No.

OH, THE IRONY! (SLIGHT RETURN)

So, Ryan Seacrest was teased for liking Paula Abdul and hating Led Zeppelin. How is that possible?

KELLY LEONARD, WASHINGTON, DC

NO JOKE

Re the so-called joke told by Lars Frederiksen of Rancid ("What's red and gold and looks good on a hippie? Fire."): As someone who is proud to call himself a hippie, all I have to say is (a) that wasn't very funny the first time I heard it, back before he was born, and (b) it's a bit rich coming from someone who has what appears to be a peacock's genitals perched on his head.

PAMELA OENSLER, ELIZABETH, NJ

Hey, we thought hippies were supposed to be nice!

HAIRY

After reading your one-star review of *Cursed*, I was intrigued enough to actually see it. After all, I thought, I like horror movies. I like Christina Ricci. How awful can it be? And now I know.

RICK JENSEN, BURBANK, CA

IN THE RED

Since your magazine started, I have accrued \$3,144.08 in debt from monthly downloads. But it's a small price to pay considering all the happiness I derive from the music. Your critics are insightful and smart and know the sound of crap when they hear it.

JEFFREY J. MASLEY, LOS ANGELES



WIN ME!

IF POP STARS WERE DOGS...

Send us a photo with your name and address and who your dog happily resembles. If we print your photo, you'll win an iRiver H10 5GB MP3 player, complete with FM tuner and color screen to view photos!

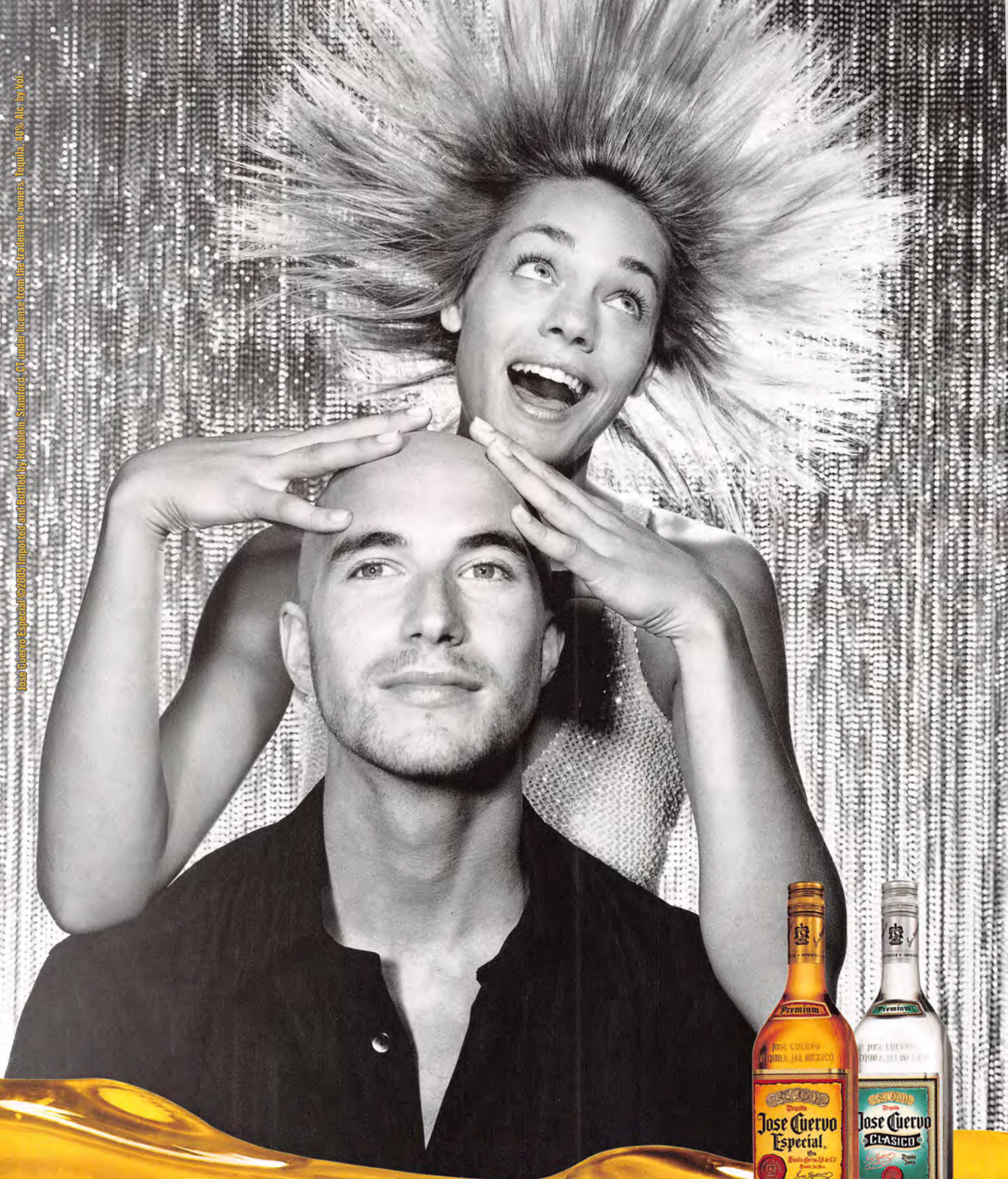


DAVID ST. HUBBINS
THE POP STAR



OZZIE
THE DOG

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SPECIAL ISSUE!

THE SMOKIN' HOT 100!

A TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE
RANKING OF OUR
FAVORITE ARTISTS,
TRENDS AND SINGER/
ACTRESS/HEIRESSSES
IN MUSIC TODAY

ON SALE

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23

IF I WASN'T STUCK
IN THIS MAGAZINE,
I'D BE OUT THERE
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"Listen to Crazy Frog and you can hear

THE DEATH KNELL of the traditional music industry." p.26

8.05

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ... AND PLENTY YOU DON'T!

BURNER

IDOLIZED!

A RECHARGED **COURTNEY LOVE**
ESCORTS FRANCES BEAN TO
THE AMERICAN IDOL FINALE

The season finale of *American Idol* drew two unlikely fans: grunge queen Courtney Love and her daughter Frances Bean Cobain, who strolled down the red carpet together before taking their seats and giving the "devil sign" salute.

The rocker/actress took her daughter to Los Angeles's Kodak Theater to watch as country sweetheart Carrie Underwood was voted the latest *American Idol*, beating out Southern-fried rock specialist Bo Bice. "The rocker should always win," Love said on the red carpet. Frances Bean, who will turn 13 in August, admits she is a big fan of the show, and also plays guitar.



'FRO-TASTIC

PHIL SPECTOR ARRIVES
IN COURT SPORTING
ECCENTRIC LOOK

On trial for the murder of actress Lana Clarkson in February 2003, Phil Spector seems to be taking sartorial tips from Michael Jackson. The famed music producer, 64, showed up for an L.A. court date wearing a dandy ensemble featuring a velvet-collared blazer, a brooch, shiny pearl buttons and a powder-blue pocket square. On his head he sported a wig in the shape of a lawless sphere at least six inches in radius, and oddly resembling that of Yahoo Serious.

Prosecutors spent the session trying to make the case for Spector's "long history" of pulling guns on women.

AHOY!

KID ROCK AND **ELTON JOHN**'S FIANCÉ SPORT MATCHING OUTFITS FOR A BOAT RIDE



During the Cannes Film Festival, **KID ROCK** dons a white hat. Its red trim matches the shirt of his seafaring pal, Elton John's longtime partner David Furnish.



AFTER HAVING gently led Kid Rock into the boating vessel, Furnish fumbles with his belt.



THE COORDINATED PAIR reach their luxurious Eden Roc Hotel in a jovial mood. We're still trying to find out who "Rich" is.

NEWS ROUNDUP

STEVIE WONDER's new "So What's the Fuss" video has a special add-on for his blind fans: a simultaneous description narrated by Busta Rhymes. "Until now, music videos have been very one-dimensional for those who are blind or with low vision," Wonder said.

JACK WHITE married model Karen Elson on June 1. A shaman priest conducted the ceremony, on a canoe in Brazil where the Amazon, Rio Solimoes and Rio Negro meet.

ROD STEWART's fiancée, Penny Lancaster, is expecting the 60-year-old singer's seventh baby.



Crazy Frog's ringtone outsold Coldplay's new single by nearly four to one in the U.K.

Pollywogged

Coldplay shut out of the top of the charts by a cartoon croaker

COLDPLAY'S CHRIS MARTIN has it all: global rock & roll superstar-dom, a movie-star wife, a beautiful baby. But he still can't beat an ugly animated frog.

"Speed of Sound," the lead single from the British foursome's new album, *X&Y*, had to settle for second place on the U.K. charts when it was outsold nearly four to one by "Crazy Frog Axel F," a ringtone-based novelty hit that moved 150,000 copies its first week.

"That little thing should have its legs chopped off," said Martin. "I'd like to eat them in a restaurant."

The song's complex history can be traced back to 1997, when a 17-year-old Swede named Daniel Malmédahl e-mailed friends an MP3 of himself impersonating the high-pitched, ribbit-like whine of a revving moped. The MP3 eventually found its way to a 3-D graphics designer who used it as the voice of

one of his cartoons—a mischievous blue amphibian with bulging eyes and conspicuous genitalia. European ringtone company Jamster acquired the sound and rechristened it "Crazy Frog"; soon it was the U.K.'s top-selling download and had spawned legions of spinoffs. This spring, two German club DJs mixed Frog's shouts—sort of like

"THIS SONG IS THE DEATH KNELL OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY"

Cab Calloway on helium—with "Axel F," the synth-driven theme to the 1984 flick *Beverly Hills Cop*, and released it as a single.

Some music-biz insiders, like former Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren, see the success of an Internet phenomenon like "Crazy Frog" as a harbinger of what's to come. "Listen to this song and you can hear the death knell of the traditional music industry," he said. **JOSH EELLS**

WORD!



"I'm not a nut. I'm very smart."

MICHAEL JACKSON



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ALMOST FAMOUS

TONY YAYO

50 CENT'S HOMEY CELEBRATES FREEDOM WITH NEW CD AND REALLY BIG NECKLACE

BY JONAH WEINER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

On January 8, 2004, Tony Yayo had one of the best nights of his life—and then one horrible morning after.

Yayo had spent the previous year sitting behind bars for skipping town on a gun charge, while his G-Unit crewmates became globe-touring superstars. On the day of Yayo's release, 50 Cent and some pals picked him up for a night of celebration.

Sitting at a Brooklyn diner before a plate stacked high with bacon, he remembers the evening. "They bought me a chinchilla coat and a Jacob watch, took me to dinner—and I had two girls that night," he glows.

The next day, however, Yayo's parole officer discovered that the rapper owned a fake

passport, and he was hauled right back in. "I was like, 'damn.'"

In prison, Yayo—born Marvin Bernard—passed time scrawling rhymes, many of which have landed on his debut, *Thoughts of a Predicate Felon*. Graduating from the 50 School of Songwriting, Yayo offsets tales of carnage with pop melodies and flirtatious refrains. "The songs I wrote in jail are really violent," he says.

For Yayo—jail-free since spring 2004—this has been a long time coming. As a teenager in Jamaica, Queens, his reputation for rapping earned him a prestigious slot as Curtis Jackson's wingman. "When I was in high school, 50 was the Fonz of Southside,"

ALL ABOUT ME!

WON'T TOUR WITHOUT
Condoms. Magnum condoms.

FAVORITE MOVIE
If you don't own *Scarface*, something's wrong with you. I've seen it over 100 times.

MOST EXTRAVAGANT PURCHASE
\$120,000 for this diamond necklace [pictured].

CHOICE MIDNIGHT SNACK
Nacho Cheese-flavored Doritos.

he laughs. "Even back then, he was a legend."

Yayo's not wasting any time enjoying the spoils of celebrity. Diamond-carpeted jewelry decorates his earlobes and wrists. A chunky medallion features a spinning glass compartment full of loose diamonds—it's sort of like wearing Liberace's washing machine around your neck.

Conspicuously missing are the G-Unit staple attractions: bullet wounds. "I'm the only one who hasn't been shot," he says, shaking his head. Cracking a smile, he raps a knuckle on the table. "Knock wood."

OUT NOW

THOUGHTS OF A PREDICATE FELON
(G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE)

"I'M THE ONLY ONE IN G-UNIT
WHO HASN'T BEEN SHOT."

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WHEN WILL YOUR FAVORITE POP STAR CROAK?



Durst re-enacts a scene from his latest porn tape.

#20 FRED DURST

CURRENT AGE **33**

DEATH CALCULATOR STARTS AT AGE **79**

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

Caucasian male -2

Sad childhood: "Locked up in my room"; parents "telling me I was crazy." -2

Self-esteem issues: "I'm a loser"; graduated by "kissing teacher's ass." -1

Inked: Beaucoup tattoos present risk of infection and hepatitis. -1

Love hurts: Divorced from "cheating" wife, who is mother of his daughter, Adriana. -3

Social deviant: Kicked security guard in head, beat wife's lover, "robbed stores," spent time in pokey. -3

STD high risk: "Unbelievable sinner," "plenty of sex," video porn star. -6

Anal: Perfectionist to the point of being obsessive-compulsive. -3

Ambition: composer, performer, video director, producer, actor. +4

Lone ranger: Feels isolated and depressed: "I'm miserable," "I'm lonely." -1

Always angry: Friends say onstage anger mirrors off-stage behavior. -2

Renewed purpose: New album and reality TV show, *My Life With Fred Durst*. +2

Exhibitionism: Sex video "release." -1

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY **60**

PROJECTED YEAR OF DEATH **2032**

Gerontologist **DR. DEMKO** says: "Anger management will reduce heart-disease risk. A physical will determine if despair is triggered by a chemical imbalance."

NEWS ROUNDUP

SHERYL CROW has admitted to hosting a food fight at her favorite hotel, Shutters on the Beach in Santa Monica, California. "We didn't ruin anything, but somebody definitely had to do some spot-cleaning," she said.

BONO has revealed that **U2** are considering releasing a new version of their disappointing 1997 album *Pop*. "We had to wrap up the album sooner than we wanted ... the bones of a great album are there," he said.

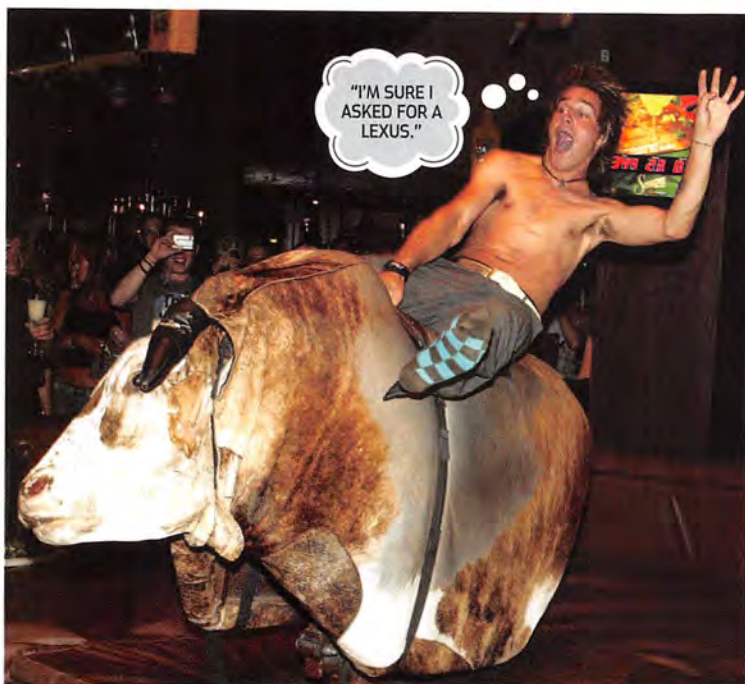
A 31-year-old Seattle computer technician has been sentenced to jail for a month after being found guilty of stalking **AVRIL LAVIGNE**. James Speedy claimed his wife encouraged him to pursue Lavigne to help beat his obsession with the young singer.

WORD!



"There's no way she's getting an invite to my wedding."

CHRISTINA AGUILERA ON BRITNEY SPEARS



"I'M SURE I ASKED FOR A LEXUS."



"BEST EIGHT SECONDS OF MY LIFE!"

Bull!

Ryan Cabrera mounts a steer, gets thrown off, hair fails to move

Ryan Cabrera, the spiky-haired former boyfriend of Ashlee Simpson, was knocked flat on his back after attempting to ride a mechanical bull in May.

The singing reality-television star removed his shirt, mounted the bull and proceeded to ride it at the Tequila Ranch at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in

Seminole, Florida, after performing at the Y-100.7 Summer Splash tour alongside Gwen Stefani and host Lindsay Lohan.

As various Backstreet Boys and singer Jesse McCartney looked on, Cabrera managed to stay on for a few seconds before being bucked onto the surrounding mats.

LAUREN HARRIS

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USEFUL TIPS FROM THE STARS

HOW TO ... PIMP YOUR AFTERLIFE

Your life may have sucked, but your eternal resting place will be a dream come true, as long as you follow this post-mortem primer from Chicago punks **ALKALINE TRIO**

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

Alkaline Trio, left to right:
Dan Andriano, Matt Skiba, Derek Grant.

1

PROTECT THE GOODS

MATT SKIBA, SINGER/GUITARIST: "If you're being buried traditionally, always spring for the metal coffin—they last longer and don't decay. So if you have to be exhumed, your body won't look like a bloated fish. Also, the crypt that the coffin goes into has to be fully insulated with concrete."

2

LOCATION, LOCATION

DEREK GRANT, DRUMMER: "If you're being interred in a double-stacked plot, see to it that your body is the last to go in and is on top; otherwise the body above may leak on you. And that's gross. Personally, I'd like my bones packed into a kick drum for Tommy Lee to play on tour with Mötley Crüe."

3

MAKE IT PERSONAL

DAN ANDRIANO, BASSIST: "With a mortician, go over every last detail. Airbrush the coffin or buy one of those Kiss caskets—something that reflects your personality. I heard that Jay Leno, for example, has arranged to be burned in his '57 Chevy. Oh, and take a cellphone, in case the doctors got it wrong."

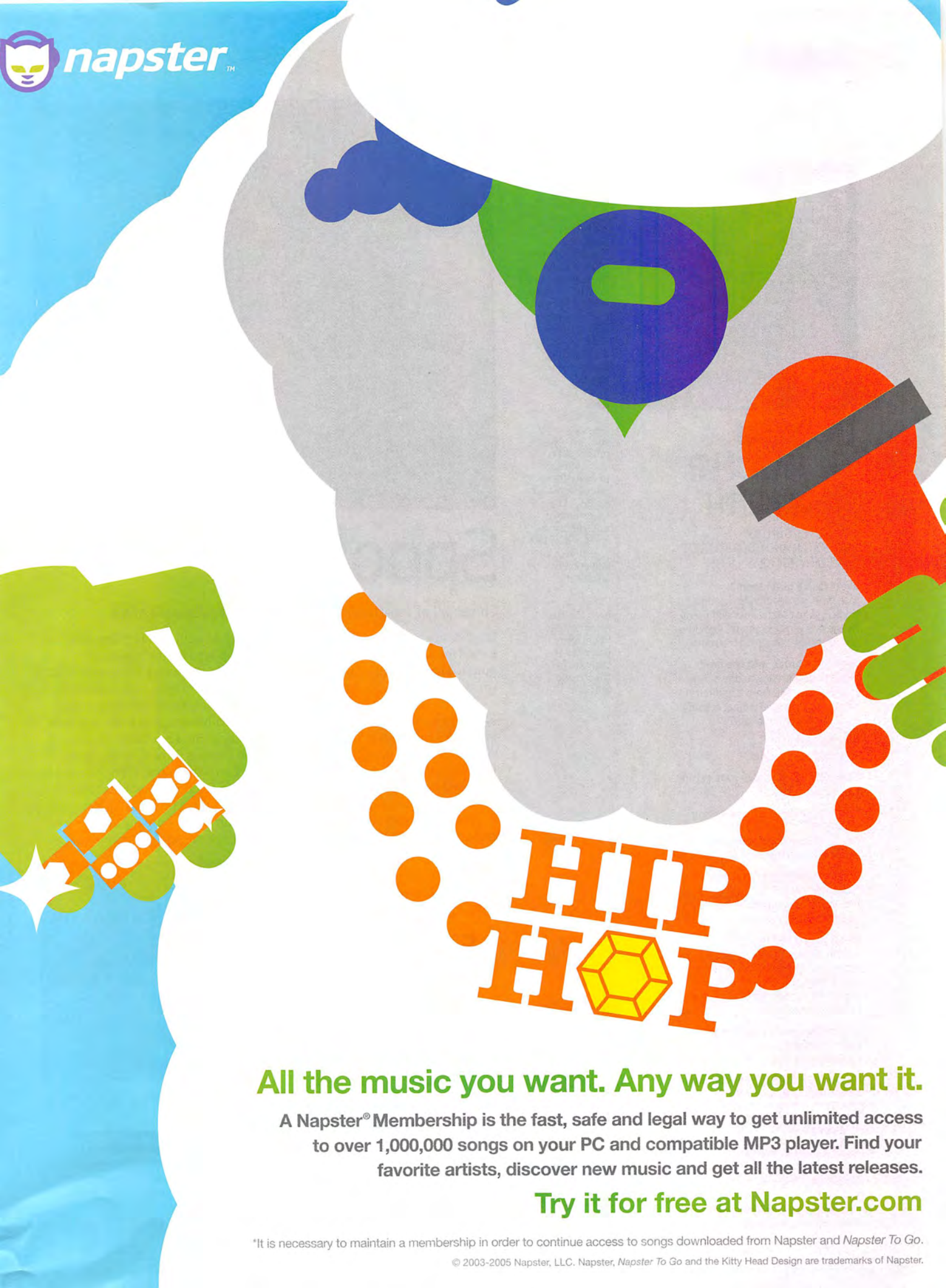
4

MAKE IT REALLY PERSONAL

SKIBA: "As David Cross says, I don't care what happens to my body after I die. That's why I'd like to be cremated. Cemeteries are beautiful, but I've taken up enough space as it is. So I'll put the ashes into a crystal dildo for my wife. Hey, I could market a line of those! We'd call them 'Ashes to Asses.'"

ALKALINE TRIO'S NEW ALBUM, *CRIMSON (VAGRANT)*, IS OUT NOW.

DAN: JACKET AND SHIRT BY BEN SHERMAN TIE BY TRIPP PANTS BY CNC BY COSTUME NATIONAL SHOES BY PATRICK COX
DEREK: JACKET AND SHIRT BY PERRY ELLIS SIGNATURE TIE BY TRIPP PANTS BY CALVIN KLEIN BELT BY CNC BY
COSTUME NATIONAL CUFF LINKS BY FACCIONABLE SHOES BY CONVERSE MATT: JACKET BY PERRY ELLIS T-SHIRT BY
PAUL FRANK CUMMERBUND BY LORD WEST IMPERIAL COLLECTION PANTS BY CALVIN KLEIN SHOES BY CONVERSE



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Toby Keith:
"These colors
don't run ...
although the
denim did
shrink."

DO YOU ROCK?

TOBY KEITH

DOES THE COUNTRY SUPERSTAR AND ÜBER-PATRIOT INDEED ... ROCK?

Ever trash a hotel room?

One time, we decided to do some drinking and practice our golf swing. By the end of the night, we knocked out every light fixture in the room.

Ever had a brush with the law?

When I was a teenager, one of my friends stole \$20 from a hamburger stand. I got charged with accessory to a "strong-arm robbery."

Biggest high?

Thoroughbred racing.

Stupidest thing you've ever eaten?

Lamb testicles.

Most expensive item of clothing you own?

I've had a couple of leather suits made by Lords in L.A. that cost \$20,000 each.

Biggest celebrity's home you've gotten drunk in?

I've had wine in the White House. So I guess the President.

Worst rock & roll injury?

I came running out on stage, tripped over a monitor and cracked my shin and broke a thumb joint. I also knocked the neck out of my guitar. I still finished the show.

Last person you've wanted to kill, maim or injure?

Osama bin Laden.

Biggest celebrity in your cellphone?

Charles Barkley.

DAVE HILL

VERDICT

WHOA! A GOOD OL' BOY EATING LAMB TESTICLES? TOBY KEITH ROCKS BIG-TIME!

TOBY KEITH'S ALBUM *HONKYTONK UNIVERSITY* (DREAMWORKS NASHVILLE) IS OUT NOW.



NEWS ROUNDUP

USHER has denied ever dating supermodel Naomi Campbell—despite constant rumors about the pair being in love and several photographs of them appearing in magazines. "She just accompanied me to an event," he said.

KELLY OSBOURNE has reportedly entered a drug-rehab center in Pasadena to deal with "some personal issues." She spent time in a Malibu treatment center last year to kick an addiction to painkillers.

VANESSA CARLTON has revealed that her favorite parts of her body are her "boobs and butt."

WORD!



"I can do anything!"

PARIS HILTON

Leon Hendrix:
Decidedly un-foxy.



Spooky!

The ghost of Jimi Hendrix visits brother, keeps him out of will

Despite his legendary older brother, Leon Hendrix never picked up a guitar. That is, until he was contacted by Jimi's ghost.

Several years ago, in the corner of Leon's house, an old, unused guitar began to mysteriously vibrate. "It was a musical visit from Jimi's spirit," Leon told *Blender*. "I picked up the guitar, and I've been playing ever since."

Now Leon is trying to make a career of it, forming a trio and tour-

ing clubs with Buddy Miles, who once played in Jimi's Band of Gypsies. Leon says Jimi's spirit still helps him. "I have a lot of psychological problems about playing guitar, especially onstage in front of people," he says. "But I say 'Help me, Jimi,' and I always come up with a lick."

Last September, Hendrix lost his appeal for a portion of his father's estate, which includes Experience Hendrix, the company that controls Jimi's name and music. **WARREN COHEN**

WEIRD BAND ALERT

STOVOKOR

KLINGONS WHO CHANNEL WARMONGERING INTO METAL. BUY' NGOP!

SO, FIVE GROWN MEN DRESSED UP AS KLINGONS?

No. The band insist they are actual Klingons, on planet Earth since 2001, currently based in Portland, Oregon, and plotting the imminent subjugation of the human race. Got that?

FINE. BUT WHY METAL?

With long manes, furrowed brows and conquering instincts, these visitors were unlikely to choose emo. "Your bands hide behind their false fronts," explains singer Bill Salfelder, aka plnuH HoD. "Go wipe out



"Are you ready to rock, puny Earthlings?"

the population of an entire star system, then get back to me."

POWERFUL. WHAT ARE THE SHOWS LIKE?

"We expose your species' shortcomings with ease," says guitarist Ward Young, aka Khre'll. "It's surprising you humans come and cheer when we are the very ones who encompass your doom." **STEVE LOWE**

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ALMOST FAMOUS

ANTIGONE RISING

FIVE DIRTY-TALKIN' HIPPIE CHICKS ROCKING YUPPIES AT A STARBUCKS NEAR YOU

BY JOSH EELLS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER TZAR

According to guitarist Kristen Henderson, Antigone Rising are one of those bands that are best defined by what they're not. "We're not exactly pop," she says, "we're not exactly rock and we're not exactly country."

"And we're not exactly boys either," laughs singer Cassidy, who goes without a surname.

But that doesn't mean they can't swear like boys. Chilling at their Manhattan rehearsal studio, the rowdy five-woman jam band—comprising Henderson, her guitar-playing sister Cathy, Dena Tauriello (drums), Jen Zielenbach (bass) and Cassidy—act like a rock sorority on steroids, bristling at comparisons to wimpy singer-songwriters and joking

about who hates whom most.

Antigone earned their cult following as a live act, playing 250 shows a year and racking up 220,000 miles in their trusty white van. The grind was tough, but a show in Asheville, North Carolina, two years ago was nearly the last straw: The club was empty, the manager was, they say, a lying jerk and Cathy had "a full-on nervous breakdown." The next morning they convened for a Serious Talk.

"We let it all out," Cathy says. "'I don't even like you,' 'You don't inspire me'—really mean stuff."

"There's nothing worse than 'You don't inspire me,'" Kristen says, still bristling at the

ALL ABOUT US!

FAVORITE BOOK

Conversations With God by Neale Donald Walsch

SONG YOU CAN'T STAND

N.E.R.D.'s "She Wants to Move": "It makes me want to go on a rampage."

LEAST-FAVORITE COMPARISONS

Melissa Etheridge, the Indigo Girls

OBSESSIONS

The U.S. women's soccer team

dig. "That's a kick in the tits."

The group almost split right then, but decided to finish the last six weeks of the tour first. Luckily, they signed a record deal a month later, and now they're writing songs with Rob Thomas and promoting their major-label debut, *From the Ground Up*, a folky, unplugged live disc being sold at Starbucks outlets nationwide. And best of all, they're as cozy as ever.

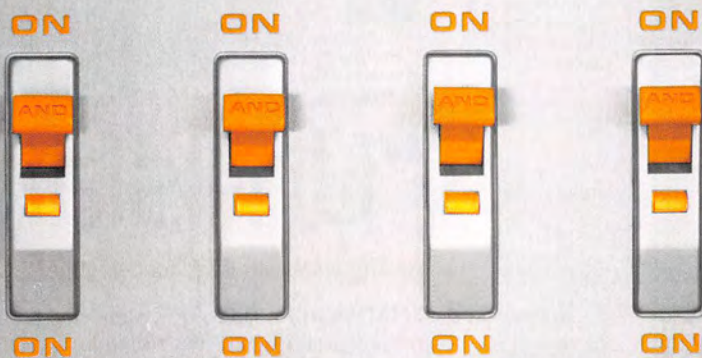
"We're so close we're not even sisters," Kristen laughs. "We're like brothers now."

OUT NOW

FROM THE GROUND UP
(HEAR MUSIC/LAVA)

Antigone Rising, left to right: Dena Tauriello, Jen Zielenbach, Cassidy, Kristen Henderson, Cathy Henderson.





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SMOGGY!

LIBERTINES DRUG AUTEUR **PETE DOHERTY** AND GIRLFRIEND **KATE MOSS** GO PUBLIC WITH THEIR LOVE



MOSS AND DOHERTY, who has stomach implants to keep opiates from working, kiss at a French airport. "Kate's my rock," he has said. "But not my rock of crack."



THE SELF-DESCRIBED penniless singer, recently cleared on robbery charges, is living at Moss's mansion with her 2-year-old daughter, Lila.



"I'M ON TOP of the world—we're trying for a baby together!" said Doherty, who is already father to a 2-year-old boy named Estile.

NEWS ROUNDUP

When "We Belong Together" reached the top of the Billboard charts, it became **MARIAH CAREY's** 16th No. 1 single—putting the pop singer just behind the Beatles (20) and Elvis (18).

A new "World of Music" exhibit has opened at the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Arkansas, featuring a selection from the former president's CD collection, musical memorabilia from his travels and some postage stamps from Chad, Africa, showing an imaginary jam session between **BILL CLINTON** and **ELVIS PRESLEY**.



Shaima Rezayee, an Afghan VJ, was murdered May 18.

"Un-Islamic"

An Afghan VJ was killed for being too Western; her brothers are suspects

SHAIMA REZAYEE, a television presenter on Afghanistan's version of MTV, was shot dead in May. Two of her brothers have been detained in connection with her killing.

The 24-year-old VJ hosted *Hop*, an Afghan music show on the television channel Tolo TV, one of several private stations set up in the country after the fall of the Taliban.

Despite her huge popularity among Afghan youth, Rezayee was dismissed after complaints of the "un-Islamic values" of her broadcast. Two months later, she was murdered.

Police have not confirmed that her killing was related to her work, but a link has not been ruled out. In March, a government panel of religious scholars issued a statement accusing the TV station—which played videos from Western artists like Madonna—of "broadcasting music, naked dance and foreign films, which are against ... national values of Afghanistan." Rezayee's show was singled out as being

particularly offensive. "[*Hop* will] destroy our country," Fazl Hadi Shinwari, chief justice of the Afghan Supreme Court, said in February.

"This will make our people accept other cultures and make our country a laughingstock around the world."

The "casual" chat between male and female presenters also created a stir, as did an on-air incident in which Rezayee was encouraged to lift her legs to display her new shoes. "'Hold up your legs' has a very bad meaning in our language," said the Deputy Minister for Information and Culture.

When the Taliban were driven from power in 2001, Rezayee, who was forbidden to attend school under their rule, was one of the first women to shun the *burka*, the traditional veil Islamic women are required to wear in public.

"I know people have various opinions about me," she once said, "but a lot of young people in this country support me." **NICK DUERDEN**

WORD!



"Botox is my best friend."

NANCY SINATRA

**If your backpack
says something about you,
tell it to shut up
and carry your stuff.**



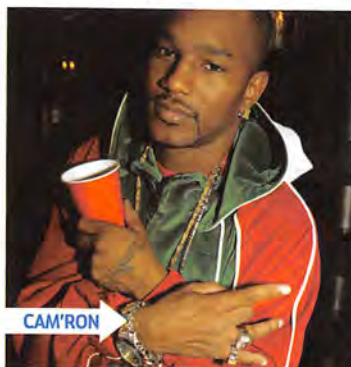
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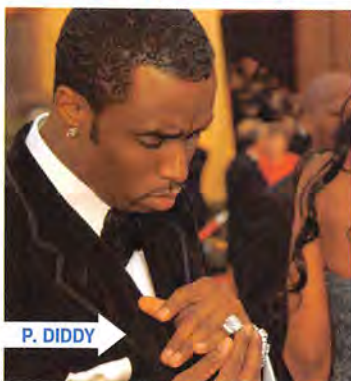
POP STAR MUST-HAVE

PINKY RINGS

MAFIOSI AND POPES HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THIS: PINKY RINGS SAY "RESPECT ME"



CAM'RON



P. DIDDY



ASHLEE SIMPSON



NELLY

NEWS ROUNDUP

Investigators have finally closed the case on the murder of Meredith Hunter by Hells Angels bodyguards during the 1969 **ROLLING STONES** performance at Altamont, California.

LIL' KIM is being sued for \$200,000 by songwriters Anthony Jeffries and Vincent Hart over alleged contributions to her 2003 *La Bella Mafia* album. The suit says the pair were eventually offered jewels worth \$10,000, which they were later asked to return "under a threat of physical violence."

SNOOP DOGG has expressed an unlikely interest in working with New Wave dandies Franz Ferdinand.

WORD!



"The first thing I would do is redecorate the White House."

JENNIFER LOPEZ ON HER PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS



Justin Hawkins considers naming the new record *Permission to Nap*.

IN THE STUDIO

"It's Undeniable!"

That's how **THE DARKNESS** describe the "power" of their second release

ENGLISH ROCK WIZARDS the Darkness have lots of things in common with their heroes Queen—epic riffs, spandex unitards, a banshee-like lead singer. Now they've got two more. They're recording their highly anticipated second album in the same studio in which Freddie Mercury's crew made "Bohemian Rhapsody." And they're doing it with legendary Queen producer Roy Thomas Baker.

"It's great," says guitarist Dan Hawkins. "Roy's got this weird energy—if he's pissed off about something, light bulbs start blowing. We've honestly gone through about 60. He's a magical bloke."

Holed up in rural Wales for the past three months, the debauched "I Believe in a Thing Called Love" hitmakers—whose bassist, Frankie Poullain, recently departed over "musical differences"—have learned to make their own fun, converting one of the rooms into a private pub complete with pool table, dartboard and *Star Wars* pinball machine. And, of course, plenty of booze.

"Let's see," says Hawkins. "Campari and soda during the rest

period, between 1 and 2 in the morning. And champagne, but we had to stop that after a while—our performances were suffering. There's nothing worse than ridiculously loud guitars when you have a hangover."

As for the rawk? "This record's going to surprise people," Hawkins says. "The track 'As the Crow Flies' is pretty out-there—a big Mormon choir, a harpsichord, two drum kits. We're not sparing any horses."

"A lot of people don't take us seriously," he says, "and we've never given a shit. But the power of these songs is undeniable." **JOSH EELLS**

ALL ABOUT OUR ALBUM

ARTIST
The Darkness
PRODUCER
Roy Thomas Baker
STUDIO
Rockfield Studios, Monmouth, Wales
LAST ALBUM
Permission to Land, 2003
NEW ALBUM
As yet untitled, due October 2005

ALSO IN THE STUDIO

Psychedelic rockers **FLAMING LIPS** are re-teaming with Dave Fridmann at Tarbox Road Studios in New York State to work on their next record, *At War With the Mystics*.

First lady of R&B **MARY J. BLIGE** is at work on her follow-up to 2003's *Love & Life* in California with Dr. Dre and guests including Jay-Z and Foxy Brown.

Nelly comrade **J-KWON** is in the studio working on *Da St Lou E Ville Slugga* at Atlanta's Zack Studios and in producers the Trackboyz's studio in St. Louis.

Pop quartet **THE STILLS** are in their native Montreal, Canada, to record the follow-up to 2003's *Logic Will Break Your Heart* at Studios Piccolo.

"Ballin' aint easy...but it's a whole lotta fun."

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DAVID Z.



BUTCHY!

REBELLIOUS POP STAR **PINK** ASSERTS HER RIGHT TO MAKE OUT WITH A WOMAN



After dining at a Sunset Plaza cafe in Los Angeles in early May, **PINK** and three galpals pile into her convertible.



PINK AND a member of her tomboy entourage kiss passionately for several seconds, as the other two passengers look on.



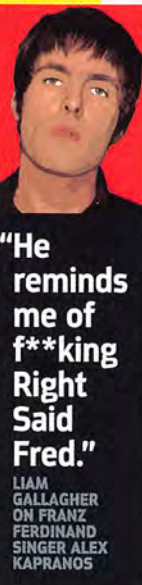
AFTER SAFELY arriving at their destination, Pink flashes devil horns and sticks out her tongue beside one of her Mohawked companions.

NEWS ROUNDUP

MÖTLEY CRÜE is suing NBC over a network ban of the band following Vince Neil's inadvertent expletive on greeting band-mate Tommy Lee during a live New Year's Eve broadcast of *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*.

MADONNA has been accused of plagiarizing the works of Belgian composer Salvatore Acquaviva for parts of her 1998 hit "Frozen." The songwriter told European television: "I was in the bath ... listening to the radio, and thought, 'That's strange—I know that melody.'"

WORD!



"He reminds me of f**king Right Said Fred."

LIAM GALLAGHER ON FRANZ FERDINAND SINGER ALEX KAPRANOS

LIFE AFTER ROCK

Cabaret Voltaire answer the "Which one's the catcher?" question.



Watson prepares to interview God.



CHRIS WATSON

THEN
GUITARIST

CABARET VOLTAIRE, 1973–1981

"WHEN RICHARD [KIRK] and I started the band, British music was a bit dreary. We had thought of becoming artists or writers, but that seemed too abstract. So we started messing around with tape recorders instead. We would make recordings, and in the evenings we drove around our hometown of Sheffield in a van, broadcasting the songs from the back. There were some great times. The Human League were neighbors—and we lived very much for the moment."

NOW

NATURAL SOUND RECORDIST

"WHEN I LEFT the band in 1981, I had already become interested in recording natural, outdoor sounds. Now I record in wild, remote locations for National Geographic and the BBC. I've tracked everything from Savannah elephants to whistling ants in East Africa and glowworms hidden in the caves of New Zealand. When you get up close, you recognize music in the most strange and unexpected places. Animals make the most beautiful rhythms I've ever heard."

AS TOLD TO LAUREN HARRIS

TWIGGY

LOHAN SHOWS OFF NEW SLIMMED-DOWN FIGURE

LINDSAY LOHAN appears to have radically changed her body type. The formerly voluptuous movie star-singer was seen poolside in South Beach in May. Photographed in a bikini, the 19-year-old was busy multitasking: smoking, reading and typing on her laptop.

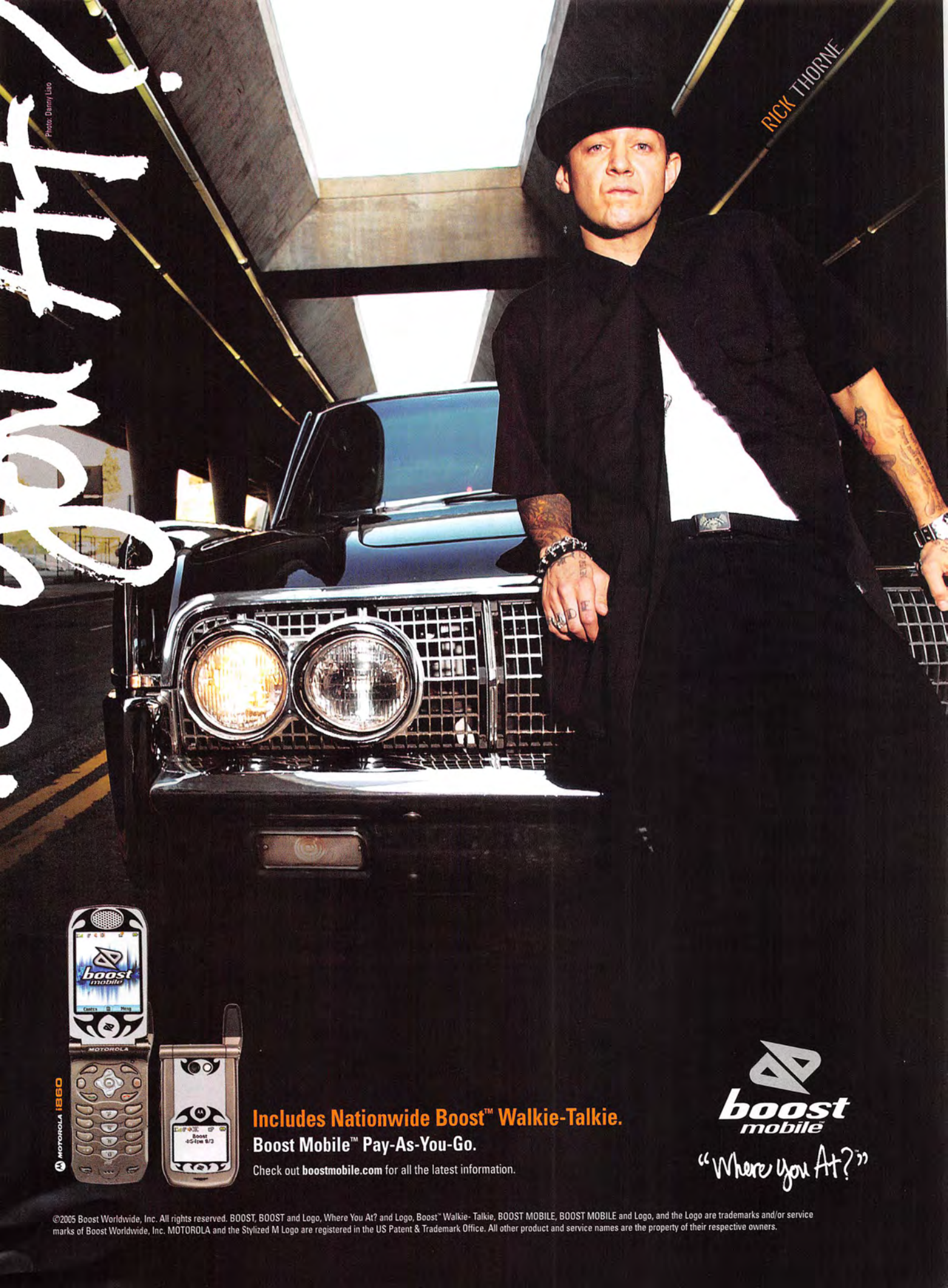
Photos of her ectomorphic frame seem to confirm reports that she's lost 20 pounds, shrinking from a size 6 to a 2. Lohan attributes the change to a new exercise regimen.



Lohan shoos away approaching hunger.

Photo: Danny Lipo

RICK THORNE



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Ryan Adams:
Desperately
seeking soap.

UNKEMPT!

A PEEVED RYAN ADAMS CURSES
FANS, WALKS OFF STAGE

NYC ROCKER RYAN ADAMS may be sporting long hair and a beard, but his temper is as short as ever.

Performing at Philadelphia's Electric Factory in May, the notorious he-diva threw a fit, complaining about a loud air conditioner and telling talkative fans to "shut the fuck up." When they didn't, he serenaded them with an impromptu smackdown. "I just came here to sing you a song," he crooned, "but you talked through the whole fucking thing." Then he stomped off the stage.

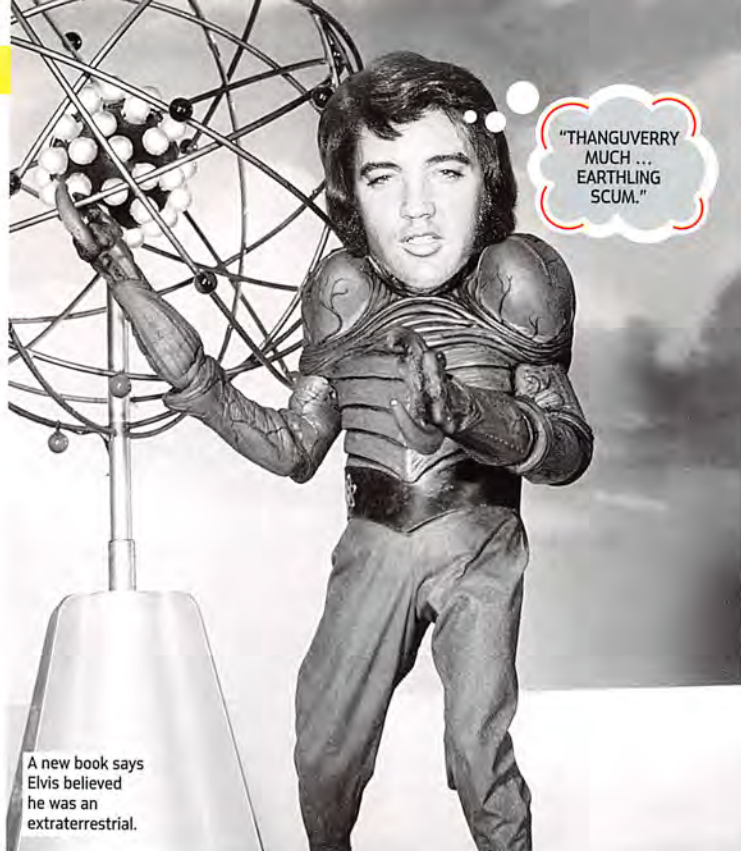
Adams's latest album, *Cold Roses*, is out now. JOSH EELLS

OBITS

THURL RAVENSCROFT
91, May 22, in Fullerton, California, of prostate cancer. The voice of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes pitch-animal Tony the Tiger, who roared the famous phrase "They're Grrrrreeeat!" His showbiz start came in music, singing backup for Bing Crosby.

JIMMY MARTIN
77, May 14, in Nashville, Tennessee, of bladder cancer. The self-styled King of Bluegrass was a member of Bill Monroe's iconic Blue Grass Boys.

DAVID WAYNE
47, May 10, in Tacoma, Washington, of complications from an automobile accident. Original vocalist for the speed-metal band Metal Church, who sang on the band's first two albums in the mid-'80s before quitting the group. In 1999 he reunited with the original lineup for the comeback album *Masterpeace*.



A new book says
Elvis believed
he was an
extraterrestrial.

Far Out

Was Elvis an alien who could levitate ashtrays? Maybe!

THE UNDERPINNING of rock music is not the electric guitar but contact from "extraterrestrial musical forces." So says Michael Luckman, author of *Alien Rock*, a book that traces the alleged belief in UFOs and aliens by a host of musicians.

Elvis Presley, Luckman says, believed he was from a "blue star planet" and that he could levitate items like ashtrays. As director of the privately owned New York Center for Extraterrestrial Research, Luckman acquired transcripts of taped phone conversations between

Presley and one of his friends.

Elvis's paranormal ties are not, however, mentioned in Peter Guralnick's well-respected 1,344-page, two volume biography about the king of rock & roll.

Also in Luckman's book are quotes from stars like Jerry Garcia, Sammy Hagar and Ace Frehley, who have all talked about being contacted by aliens, and John Lennon, Sting and Mick Jagger, who all claim to have seen UFOs. "It seems that UFOs are drawn by music," says Luckman. WARREN COHEN

POP HISTORY

FEBRUARY 2006: **EVERY CELEBRITY** ON THE PLANET DISAPPEARS



"FRED DURST
LIKES ROUND
THINGS!"



"HEY, LINDSAY,
DO THESE
PANTS MAKE
MY, LIKE,
FEMUR BONE
LOOK FAT?"

"NOT AS FAT
AS MY, LIKE,
RETARDED
EYELIDS!"



"HEY, WEREN'T YOU
THAT GUY WHO WAS
ON THAT SHOW WITH
THOSE OTHER GUYS?"

"NO, I USED
TO BE BEN
AFFLECK."

When every famous person in the world suddenly vanished, one theory suggested that their increasingly tiny brains had made extinction inevitable.

Another popular hypothesis was that the celebrities had become so thin they all floated away.

Finally, it was discovered that, thanks to reality TV, the concept of celebrity had been degraded to a point where it simply no longer existed.

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KOOL
BE TRUE.



20

SONGS YOU SHOULD
DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH

1 D12 FEAT. EMINEM

"MY BALLZ"

DERRITY/UNIVERSAL



Marshall Mathers gets all Homoerotic Quarterback on this *Longest Yard* gem, rhyming "huddle" with "butthole."

2 ROBYN

"KONICHIWA BITCHES"

KONICHIWA



The sprite-voiced Norwegian blonde serves up an electro bragfest that's one part teen pop, one part Missy Elliott.

3 WHITE STRIPES

"MY DOORBELL"

V2



Jack and Meg get funky on a swaggering piano romp about sittin' at home, lovelorn and alone.

4 THE DEAD 60s

"RIOT RADIO"

EPIC



Four Liverpool fancy boys whip up a disco-fied tangle of barbed guitars and bootylicious bass.

5 KANYE WEST

"DIAMONDS FROM SIERRA LEONE"

ROC-A-FELLA



Self-love from the best Roc MC (whose last name isn't Z).

6 TEAM9

"SOMEBODY TOLD ME (TEAM9 REMIX)"

TEAM9.NET



Sure, mash-ups are sooo 2003, but this bridge between Corey Hart and the Killers more than earns its late pass.

7 VENDETTA RED

"SILHOUETTE SERENADE"

EPIC



Wordy emo-punk from this Seattle fivesome, featuring a tear-streaked, wail-along chorus.

8 OUTKAST FEAT. SNOOP DOGG AND SLEEPY BROWN

"SO FRESH, SO CLEAN PT. 2"

PURPLE RIBBON



For this mixtape-only sequel, Outkast whip up some space-age, horn-heavy funk—and invite Snoop along.

9 OK GO

"INVINCIBLE"

CAPITOL



The Chicago foursome return with a Blur-indebted, hard-rocking tribute to a superhero, a really hot girl, or both.

10 THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS

"TWIN CINEMA"

MATADOR



From Vancouver, exuberant indie-pop riffs and oblique lyrics about the movies.

11 FOO FIGHTERS

"BEST OF YOU"

RCA



From the Foo's new double disc, some throat-rending bombast about saying "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me."

SONG OF THE MONTH

12 COLDPLAY

"FIX YOU"

CAPITOL



Their Bic-tastic power ballad, in which Chris Martin pledges to skin puppies, incite riot and steal from old people—just kidding!

13 JAY-Z

"DEAR SUMMER"

ROC-A-FELLA



Over a quiet Jigga un-rep with this love note, MC's favorite season blaze soul loop, the 5,467th time 'y blockbuster

14 THE ARCADE FIRE

"COLD WIND"

ASTRAL



Hushed, eerie a new song from t' n' geeks outfit. iful, a brand real freaks

15 SARA PAXTON

"TAKE A WALK"

BMG



The Darcy's Wild Life her Hilary Duff move, wuv over pop-rock riffs. takes or

16 LADY SOVEREIGN

"TANGO"

CASUAL



The elfin Brit grime l ues to prepare for a l sion with a merciless attack on g fake tans the color of "Oompa Lo

17 TOM VEK

"IF YOU WANT"

GO BEAT



From a London indie-rock buzz foreboding, minimal funk about cigarettes, war and fire.

18 R. KELLY

"TRAPPED IN THE CLOSET (CHAPTER 2 OF 5)"

JIVE



In the second of this twist-filled, five-piece mini-drama, Kells faces down a cuckolded gay pastor!

19 AVENGED SEVENFOLD

"BEAST & HARLOT"

WARNER BROS.



If you can't wait until you're 70, Social Security's gone and Chinese Democracy finally appears, check out these GN'R-inspired punks.

20 INTERPOL

"DIRECTION"

ASTRALWERKS



A quiet strum builds into a brewing storm of guitars and hypnotically repetitive lyrics.

Chris Martin blatantly disregards sports-jackets-only rule.



48 "I'm on a straight line when a man comes around/And he got lines in the suit."

ICON KEY



SADDOES



HIPSTERS



RAWK



AGING HIPSTERS



CRUNKY



SUPERSTAR POP



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SLIPPIN'

COMEBACK KID **MARIAH CAREY** EXPERIENCES A WARDROBE MALFUNCTION



1 DURING A LIVE PERFORMANCE in May, the diva gesticulated for emphasis, lifting her arm. She wasn't wearing a bra.



2 THE MOST SUCCESSFUL female singer of all time was performing selections from her multiplatinum CD, *The Emancipation of Mimi*.



3 UNWARE of the nip-slip, the showbiz veteran continued the show.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Bobby Brown has revealed that wife **WHITNEY HOUSTON** has now left rehab after her second visit in a year. "Everything about her spirit right now is just great," he said.

Following former *American Idol* contestant **Corey Clark's** claims to have slept with Paula Abdul, fellow judge **SIMON COWELL** has leapt to her defense. "I've never seen anything untoward in all the years I've worked with her," he said.

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE has undergone an operation to remove some throat nodules. His voice is expected to require three months' rest.

WORD!



"It's an awful existence, being famous."

KELLY OSBOURNE



Mystery solved: He's Thom Yorke!

#1 IN A SERIES AMNESIACAL GENIUSES!

Puzzling!

The strange-but-true story of England's piano-playing mystery man

HE'S KNOWN only as the "Piano Man"—a shy, anonymous virtuoso who doesn't speak but plays Tchaikovsky and the Beatles beautifully. And the search for his identity has Britain baffled.

Police found him, sopping wet and wearing a suit with all the tags cut out, on a southeast England beach in April. They sent him to a hospital, where he remained uncommunicative until social worker Michael Camp gave him a pad and pencil. He drew a piano

and was soon dazzling doctors with his piano-playing talent.

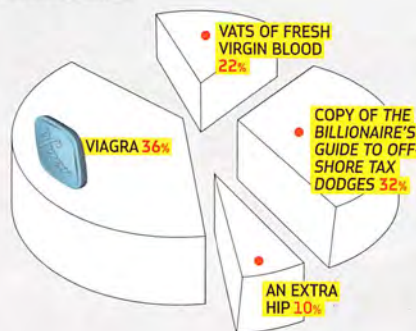
Although concerned Brits have flooded a hotline with tips, the Piano Man remains unidentified. But there's no shortage of theories. Some think he's a foreigner who jumped ship to seek asylum in the U.K. Others suspect he's mentally ill or suffering from amnesia.

"I've never dealt with someone so traumatized," Camp said. "He is petrified by people. He only relaxes when he's at the piano." *JOSH EELLS*

BLENDER'S BURNING QUESTION

WHICH ITEM IS MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND AT A ROLLING STONES CONCERT?

SURVEY SAYS



READER WISDOM

"BLOOD, IN CASE KEITH NEEDS ANOTHER FULL TRANSFUSION."

MERRILL HAGAN, MARIETTA, GA

Log on to Blender.com for August's "BURNING QUESTION." One deserving reader will have his or her comment published in the next issue and win this **MOTOROLA V220** cellphone plus 375 minutes from Cingular.

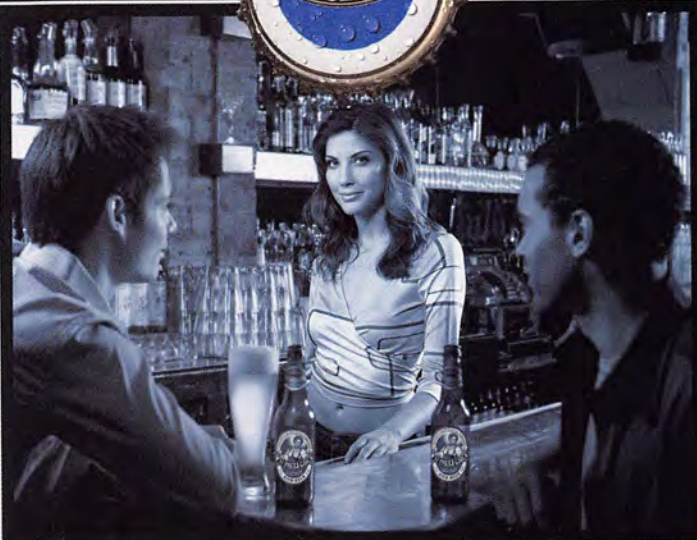




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INSIDER

KNOWING STUFF IS GOOD

Rob Thomas:
Millions of records
sold, still too cheap
to buy a car.

TMI!
**ROB
THOMAS**

"MY WIFE'S MY BEST
PORN PARTNER." P58

OWEN WILSON VINCE VAUGHN WITH CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

WEDDING CRASHERS

**IN
STORES
NOW!**

SOUNDTRACK
FEATURES A NEW SONG FROM
THE FLAMING LIPS
PLUS MUSIC FROM
JIMMY EAT WORLD,
BLOC PARTY,
DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE,
RILO KILEY, SPOON
& THE SOUNDS

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HIDE YOUR BRIDESMAIDS.



WHO **KILLED** ROCK RADIO?

OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, MODERN-ROCK STATIONS HAVE SWITCHED FORMATS OR DISAPPEARED AT AN ALARMING RATE. WHO'S TO BLAME FOR THIS DISTURBING TREND? FRED DURST, WE'RE LOOKING AT YOU.

BY BEN SISARIO // PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY MCLEOD

LIKE PLENTY OF alternative-rock bands, Interpol had a fine relationship with radio station Y100 in Philadelphia. The station played their music, the DJs gushed about the group and the band had booked a special recording session there when its winter tour came through town. But they never got the chance to record the session.

On February 24, a few days before Interpol's scheduled gig at the Electric Factory in Philadelphia, employees at Y100—the only alternative station in town, with a strong following and respectable ratings—came to work to find that the station's corporate owner, Radio One, had changed its format to hip-hop and R&B overnight. The station had been "flipped," as the identity-change and employee-bum-rush treatment is euphemistically known in the radio business. Interpol's session at Y100 was scrapped and, in a cruel twist of fate, their show at the Electric Factory was snowed out anyway. Philly's Interpol fans were out of luck.

Y100's abrupt termination was part of a rash of rock-radio closures in recent months, a change that has left some of the biggest

markets in the country without an alt-rock station. In January, WHFS, the longtime alternative station in Washington, D.C., was flipped to a Spanish-language format by its owner, Infinity Broadcasting. In February, Clear Channel's WZTA in Miami flipped to the new "Hurban" format, a bilingual mix of hip-hop, reggaeton and dance, briefly leaving Miami without a rock station; the company did another rock-to-Hurban job on KLOL in Houston last November.

And in April, New York powerhouse WXRK ("K-Rock"), owned by Infinity, altered its playlist to favor classic rock over new music, leaving New York—the biggest radio market in the country—without a commercial modern-rock station.

For the music business, these are painful

losses. Nothing sells records like radio play. Music videos, movie soundtrack tie-ins, the Internet—all help, but nothing can make new music a hit like heavy rotation on national radio.

"It's distressing what's going on," says Brandon Schmidt, Interpol's manager. "Radio is still one of the best ways to expose bands to the public, especially when there are so many other avenues for people to program for themselves, with iPods and satellite radio. Word of mouth can only go so far." Interpol has had most of its biggest success, Schmidt says, in areas where the band has received strong airplay, like in Los Angeles, whose bedrock alt station KROQ has been among the group's biggest supporters. Bands like the Strokes and the White Stripes would →



Audioslave: One of the few "new" bands to crack the airwaves.



Fred Durst: As usual, the cause of all things bad and hurtful.



Green Day: Aging rabble-rousers, yet attractive to ad-hungry programmers.

never have been able to break into mainstream success without the exposure they gained from radio play.

"At the end of the day, radio is still the most impactful way to create a hit," says Andy Gershon, the president of V2 records, which signed the White Stripes in late 2001. The label pushed "Fell in Love With a Girl" to rock radio and watched the single take off.

But as a cultural and business force, rock radio is slipping. According to ratings service Arbitron, the audience for alternative music radio—the format known as "modern rock"—is down 17 percent from its peak three years ago. And the recent station "flips" in major markets mean that the audience will likely drop even more, resulting in less and less new rock on the radio. That's not good for the record business—or for anyone who wants to hear new music.

Gripes one veteran executive at a major label: "Terrestrial radio as we know it is fucking dead and worthless."



THE LAST TIME rock radio got into trouble was in the '80s. Then, there was a single reason, as MTV broke radio's monopoly on airing new bands. But this time it's different: Radio insiders describe the current crisis as

for two reasons: The music all sounded the same, and it attracted huge quantities of young men—a coveted demographic that is among the hardest for advertisers to reach and hold on to.

After worries of losing male listeners during what one programmer calls the "Lilith format" years—the emergence of ultra-femmes Alanis, Sarah McLachlan, Meredith Brooks and Fiona Apple in the mid- to late '90s—alternative stations were thrilled with the rap-rock boom. By the turn of the millennium, programmers had turned the alternative radio format into a nü-metal sweathouse. The same stations that a few years before were playing Smashing Pumpkins and Weezer were now knee-deep in ultra-macho chestbeating to the exclusion of all else.

"The format backed itself into a corner," says Tom Calderone, the general manager of VH1 and a longtime consultant for alternative radio stations. "It was too hard, and it didn't have the broad appeal that it had at its peak." Many station program directors actually hated nü-metal, but were told by owners and consultants to exploit the trend as far as possible. "I was the kid in the back of the class making fun of the kid with the baseball cap on backwards," says Jim McGuinn, the

some afraid to turn away from the testosterone-fueled music they have come to depend on.

"There is confusion over whether to be a Mudvayne/Seether station or a Coldplay/My Chemical Romance station," says Sean Ross, an industry analyst for Edison Media Research. The two extreme poles of music that programmers now have to choose from—grunting metal and swooning indie-rock—create a stomach-turning clash when put together, he says. "Once you get beyond the Killers, Jet and the White Stripes—the handful of acts that can unify the format—it's a couple of coalitions that don't go well together."

But there's also a commercial force behind the shift away from programming new music: beer. A disproportionate amount of advertising revenue on rock radio—often 20 percent or more—comes from brewing companies eager to reach young men. But the brewers have to be careful not to pitch to the cradle. Responding to criticism that ads were targeting underage drinkers, the trade group Distilled Spirits Council recently changed its guidelines to discourage advertising with any outlet where more than 30 percent of the audience is under 21. This means any station owners who want to hold on to a valuable chunk of their advertising revenue need to make sure they play music that appeals to older listeners.

"If we lost the ability to run [beer] ads, it would crush us," says one program director. "So we paid a little more attention to the upper end of the audience." And because the advertising industry stubbornly sees radio as a medium most useful in reaching 25- to 54-year-olds on their way to and from work, an older audience means higher advertising rates for radio stations. "The money for young people is shrinking every year," says radio consultant Paul Jacobs of Jacobs Media. "Radio has gravitated to the formats where the money is." Hence the explosion of Spanish-language and adult alternative stations.

Of the top 10 songs played on alternative radio this year, five are from artists who

"TERRESTRIAL RADIO AS WE KNOW IT IS

DEAD AND WORTHLESS."

MAJOR-LABEL EXECUTIVE

a "perfect storm" of several factors that have pummeled rock, damaging the format and threatening its future.

The first culprit is Fred Durst: more specifically, the entire rap-rock trend that blew up at the end of the '90s, when limp-bizkit, Korn, Staind, Papa Roach and Godsmack's guttural sports-metal filled the post-grunge gap. As the golden age of alt-rock faded, and Pearl Jam and Alanis Morissette were no longer producing hits, the format was ripe for a takeover. And nü-metal held particular appeal to radio programmers

former program director for Y100 in Philadelphia. "But at some point in the late '90s we starting programming to the kids with the baseball cap on backwards." Some stations even cut women out of the picture entirely by removing them from their phone research—the crucial local-audience polling that tells stations what songs listeners seem to recognize or prefer.

Today—with audiences for limp-bizkit, Papa Roach and Korn in steep decline—rock radio is struggling to move on, but programmers' metal hangover still lingers, with



Beck: Thanks to Guero's strong sales, he can afford the world's furriest sofa.

date to the first Clinton administration—Beck, Nine Inch Nails and the Rage/Soundgarden team-up Audioslave; Green Day have two. And although these bands have recently made some of the strongest music of their careers, they're also especially attractive to radio programmers because they're likely to draw listeners in their 20s and 30s who will help keep their station's demographic above the legal line. But all those aging hipsters may be alienating many young listeners. "Weezer and Beck are heritage bands and make good records," says Jack Isquith, the executive director of AOL Music and Radio, "but I don't know that a 16-year-old feels like they're his bands—those are his older brother's bands."

The fastest-growing new radio format, however, is based not on a demographic trend but on the iPod. The spread of personal music devices and file-sharing networks has revealed a preference that radio programmers never knew their listeners had: People love a little surprise and serendipity when they listen to music, the kind of random connections made when an iPod is set to shuffle and spits out odd yet familiar combinations. This aesthetic is the basis of a new format, known as "Jack," "Bob" or by other regular-dude names, that embraces virtually anything from the last three decades or so, regardless of its genre, as long as it was a hit: Michael Jackson, Nine Inch Nails, U2, "My Sharona." Faced with shrinking rock audiences, stations owners began to roll out the Jack format about two years ago, and it has found extraordinarily high ratings; listeners find it fun and engaging. "Radio is learning that people want a lot more diversity," says Dave Beasing, a consultant at Jacobs Media who specializes in alt-rock. "People are used to a lot more variety than they used to be. And they have learned to go out and discover it on their own." But of course, "Jack" leaves virtually no room for new music.

Radio programmers and music business insiders report genuine excitement about new music now—Coldplay, the Killers,

the Bravery, the White Stripes and others are making some of the best music they've heard in years. Indeed, rock radio probably should be healthier than it's been in a long time: The Killers, Franz Ferdinand and the Arcade Fire draw listeners across demographic lines, reaching smart teens, women and listeners in their 30s and beyond. But many of these listeners aren't tuning in to hear it, having abandoned redundant alt-rock radio during the meathead years for iPods, satellite radio and the Internet.



RADIO ITSELF IS getting old: Its basic science hasn't changed much since the FM revolution of the 1960s. And the last decade has given people new ways to hear and discover music—as well as a reason to shut off their radios altogether. Satellite radio, the Internet, podcasts and the iPod are all reducing people's dependence on radio and depleting their patience for those nuisances of radio that were once thought unavoidable: commercials, annoying DJs, having no power over the music you hear. But new broadcasting technology can also be rock radio's savior.

When Jeff Lyons, an editor for a Philadelphia legal publication and a diehard Y100 fan, found that his favorite station had gone



Ex-Pistols Steve Jones, seconds after being thrashed by Cousin Bruce.

AIR ESSENTIALS

GOOD ROCK RADIO MAY BE HARD TO FIND—BUT IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE. HERE ARE THREE ROCK-RADIO STATIONS THAT TOTALLY DON'T SUCK ...

1 INDIE 103.1 LOS ANGELES, CA

Started in late 2003, Indie 103.1 is like a slightly hungover but still hilarious friend with highly eclectic tastes and a long pop memory—a style personified by daily host (and former Sex Pistols guitarist) Steve Jones, the coolest man on radio today.

SAMPLE SPINS: Foo Fighters, "Best of You"; New York Dolls, "Personality Crisis"; the Lemonheads, "It's a Shame About Ray"

2 WOXY.COM

After its broadcast station was sold last year, this famously adventurous alt station in Cincinnati continued online. The WOXY Web stream is even better than it was on air—fresh, up-to-the-minute, with remarkably few duds.

SAMPLE SPINS: The Hold Steady, "Stevie Nix"; Grandaddy, "The Crystal Lake"; the White Stripes, "My Doorbell"

3 SIRIUS DISORDER

CHANNEL 24, SIRIUS SATELLITE RADIO

With thoughtful programming by freeform radio legends Meg Griffin and Vin Scelsa, Sirius's anything-goes station is the antidote to the cookie-cutter playlist.

SAMPLE SPINS: Garbage, "Bleed Like Me"; the Jayhawks, "Save It for a Rainy Day"; Lightnin' Hopkins, "Lightnin's Boogie"

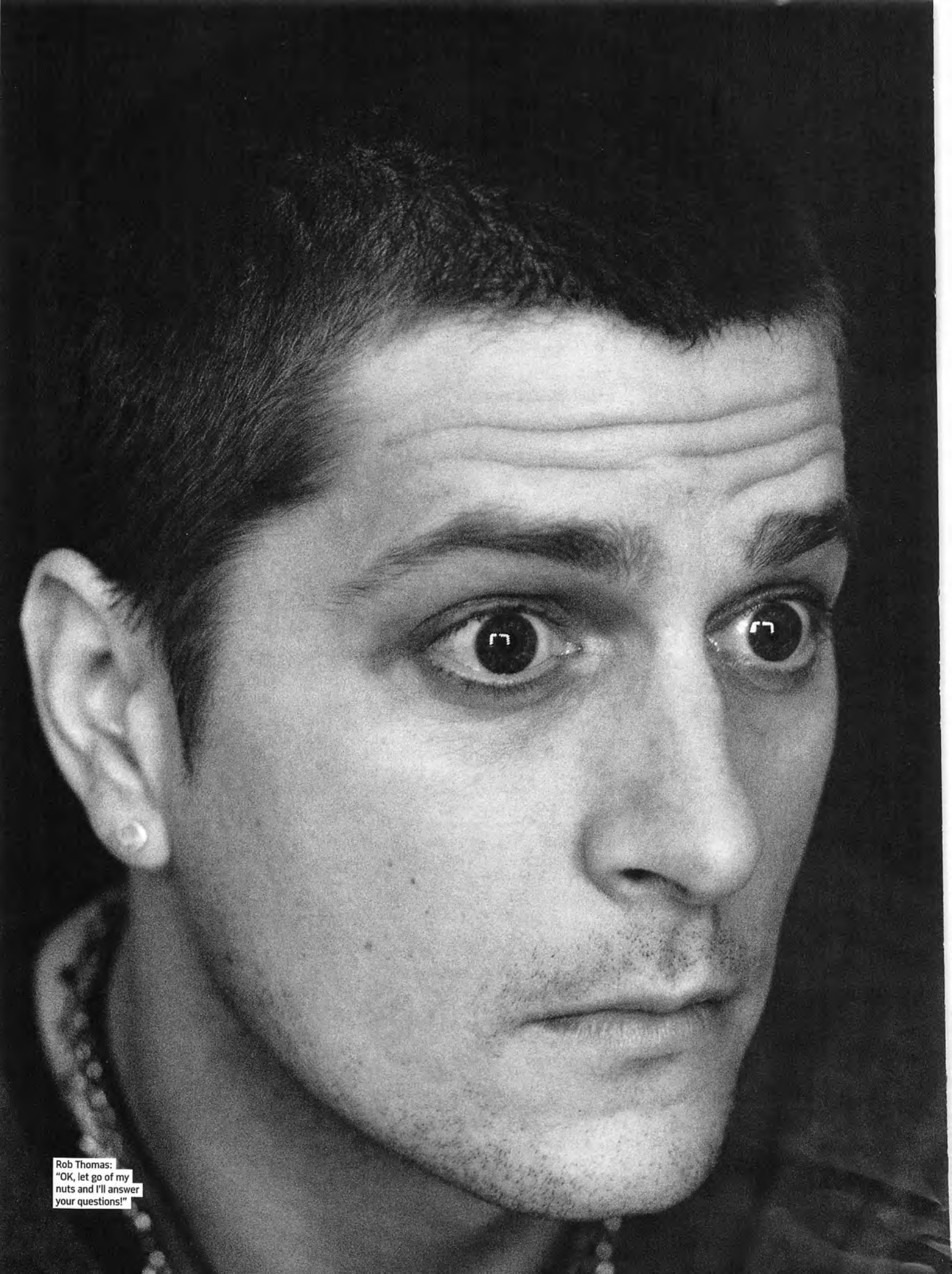
BEN SISARIO

off the air and the musical options for his commute were either metal, mainstream, classic rock or silence, he chose silence. "I don't listen to the radio in the car anymore with Y100 gone," he says. "There's a void in the city now. I just listen to the traffic."

But when he gets to work, Lyons clicks on Y100's Web stream. After the station went off the air, a group of former employees started y100rocks.com, a streaming version of the old station, with far a more adventurous playlist and no commercials. Many other shuttered rock stations around the country have done the same: The legendary WOXY in Cincinnati, sold in early 2004, has been reborn as woxy.com and has begun to establish a significant online presence; both y100rocks.com and woxy.com are streamed on Apple's iTunes.

Webcasting can't hope to attain the scale of audience traditional radio has reached. But, Jim McGuinn, who runs y100rocks.com out of his house, is hopeful.

"For me, Y100's going away could in the long run be the best thing that ever happened," McGuinn says. "65,000 people signed a petition within a couple of weeks. Those people are anxious to get music back on the radio. And if it does come back, listeners will not take it for granted. They really miss it now that it's gone." [BLENDER]



Rob Thomas:
"OK, let go of my
nuts and I'll answer
your questions!"

Dear Superstar

YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS. WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

ROB THOMAS

THE MATCHBOX TWENTY SINGER TURNED SOLO STAR SAYS HE LIKES TO DRESS UP AS A SUMO WRESTLER, CLAIMS TO HAVE BETTER "CONNECTIONS" THAN WILLIE NELSON AND THINKS *BLENDER* IS MEAN. BUT ROB THOMAS IS WRONG! ABOUT THE LAST BIT, ANYWAY ...

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS BUCK

"I'VE JUST COME back from London, which was cool," says Rob Thomas, shortly after arriving—punctually—at a downtown Manhattan photo studio. "We've played some really big shows there—but I could still run down the street naked and no one's going to give a fuck."

That situation may soon change, thanks to his recent album, ... *Something to Be*, which finds the matchbox twenty frontman going solo after selling 25 million copies with matchbox and, in his off-duty hours, collaborating with the likes of Carlos Santana, Willie Nelson and Mick Jagger. With the CD having hit No. 1 in its first week of release, Thomas's profile is getting higher and higher. It is has also gotten thinner, the onetime "cuddly" Floridian having trimmed down to a state of shorn-headed buffdom.

"There's old footage that I can't even watch now because I just look so bad," admits the 33-year-old, who has traveled from upstate New York, where he lives with his model wife, Marisol. "I think 25 pounds was just bloat—the water and whiskey I had stored in my cheeks."

Thomas's reputation as one of rock's nicest stars may make him cringe. But it is more than justified this morning, as he scurries around making *Blender* a cup of joe and offering us a blast of his freshly rolled joint. Thomas even says he has been looking forward to answering your questions.

"Of course, but what else am I going to say?" he laughs. "Hey, *Blender* readers, go fuck yourselves?"

KID ROCK ONCE WROTE A LYRIC SAYING THAT HE'S GOT MORE MONEY THAN MATCHBOX TWENTY. DO YOU THINK THAT'S TRUE?

ORIGINALBABYDOLL82, BRISTOL, CT

I doubt it. I mean, I think he's got more money than any single member of matchbox twenty. But [completing Kid Rock's couplet] he *does* get more ass than Mark McGrath. That is true.

WHAT'S THE MEANEST THING YOU'VE EVER READ ABOUT YOURSELF?

CHRISSYIN03, TEMPE, AZ

There was an article—I actually thought it was in *Blender*, but it wasn't—which said that if you're looking to take up skeet-shooting you should try my new record. Ha!

SO, WHAT'S UP WITH MATCHBOX TWENTY? HAVE YOU GUYS BROKEN UP OR WHAT?

RAMONA4, ANN ARBOR, MI

No. The thing is, every time we finished a tour we were very excited to go into the studio. This is the first time we finished a tour and we were completely uninspired to make a new matchbox record. This is our chance, I think, to get inspired everywhere else and then come back to the band.

AFTER YOUR ALBUM GOT TO NO. 1, COULD YOU HEAR THE GRITTED TEETH WHEN THE REST OF THE BAND RANG UP TO CONGRATULATE YOU?

DIVOTV, YOUNGSTOWN, OH

I wouldn't know, because only my drummer [Paul Doucette] has called me. He's my best friend. He called up that day: "Man, this is the best, congratulations." Nobody else in my band called me. And then, →



Attempting to get a casino license with wife Marisol, 2001.



Carlos Santana: Oddly, only the second-highest person in the band.

finally, my bass player called me. But only because he had heard that I had said that he had heard the first song and didn't like it. So then he called me: "I haven't even heard your record yet." I was like, well, why the fuck haven't you heard my record? I would have heard *your* record by now. So maybe there won't be another matchbox record, now that I think about it.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR CHEEBA FROM?

MATCHBOX22, WICHITA, KS

Well, in New York or L.A., there are delivery services that are really easy to get ahold of. They're wonderful. I wish we could give them a plug—wouldn't that be great? But in the suburbs, it's just not flying around out there. And you don't want to start going down to the streets and be like, "Hey, kids, how you doing? No, I'm not Rob Thomas—just another spliffhead, that's me."

WHAT'S WILLE NELSON'S "SUPPLY" LIKE?

GOODOLBOY, LUBBOCK, TX

It's good, but I set him up with even better. I set him up with a great L.A. connection, this guy who also makes heavy, Satanic, dark-prince music. So I got a call once from Willie saying he needed to know how to get the number for that "devil weed."

IS IT TRUE THAT CARLOS SANTANA HAD NO IDEA WHO YOU WERE BEFORE YOU RECORDED "SMOOTH" TOGETHER?

JANATEES, METAIRIE, LA

I think so. He listened to the demo and said, "Well, does this guy sing? I like his voice." That puts you in your place. You sell 10 million records and then you go, "Oh, that's what it means—nothing at all." It means I've still got 30 years to go.

WHAT'S THE WORST OR WEIRDEST SHOW YOU'VE EVER PLAYED?

LEH217, FOND DU LAC, WI

It's always corporate shows. Because those are the ones where people are going, "Well, fuck you, we've paid you to play and we'll sit here and do whatever we want." There

was one that we did for distributors. It was in this ski lodge in the Adirondacks. There were maybe 300 people, and we were playing on this little tiny stage. In the back they had those inflatable suits that you put on to do fake sumo wrestling. So at some point, I ran off the stage and came back on wearing one of those and did the last number rolling around the stage in my sumo suit. The best part was: not even a fucking smirk. They were obviously just like, "We don't get it."

WHAT KIND OF SMALL TALK WAS THERE WHEN YOU WERE WRITING WITH MICK JAGGER?

BROWNSUGAR72, DURHAM, NC

Not much. He's such a nice guy and really generous and a gentleman. But I really could never get a footing. Like, with Willie, we hung out for two days and it was non-stop talking about the music we loved. With Mick, it was much more about what we were writing. We partied and stuff, but I think we're just different people.

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WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED YOUR FAME TO GET SOMETHING?

CHEVYDUDE, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

I guess it was the last time that I got a good seat at a hard-to-book restaurant. And I just went to the Cream reunion in London that I probably wouldn't have gone to had I not known the people that I knew. But you find that's all fame is good for. And it's never worth it if you have to say who you are. As soon as you go, "Do you know who I am?" it doesn't matter anymore. Adam Duritz and I were once outside a club in Italy and they wouldn't let us in. And Adam's like, "American rock stars! American rock stars! No? No good?" It puts you back a peg.

WAS THE MONEY YOU EARNED FROM "SMOOTH" WORTH US HAVING TO HEAR IT A HUNDRED GAZILLION TIMES?

JCSGIRL, SANTA CLARA, CA

No. I apologize for that. I appreciate that that song got under a lot of people's skin after a while. But you have to understand that no one has heard it more than I have.

WHAT ARE THE BEST AND WORST SONGS YOU'VE EVER WRITTEN?

BUNNYKAT, STONE HARBOR, NJ

I have a song called "You Won't Be Mine," from our second record. It's a little jazzy thing. As a writer, I love the lyrics, I love the move of it. I can't even go into the worst song that I've ever written. But the worst song that I've ever put on record was "Mad Season," which I think is pretty much shit. I was so glad, when we hit the third record, that was one of the songs that we were, like, we just won't play that. And I was, like, oh, fucking thank you, God. But then you meet people and they're like, "Mad Season" is my favorite song. And you're like, *really?*

WHY DO SO MANY FUCKED-UP THINGS HAPPEN IN YOUR HOME STATE, FLORIDA?

OKEEDOKEY8, JACKSON, MS

I think it's one of those places where it's half cosmopolitan and half pure redneck.



"I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER THE
FIRST TWO YEARS
OF THE BAND."

And when you have those two together, it's very iffy. Atlanta's one of those places too: half very forward-thinking and half almost puritanical. And that's a scary mixture.

WHAT'S THE STUPIDEST THING THAT YOU'VE EVER DONE HIGH?

CAPNCHRONIC, DOVER, PA

Once, when I was 19 or 20, and I was on way too much acid at a Halloween party, we decided that we loved the way our hands looked when we'd pick up dry ice and hold onto it and then let it go. I swear to God, the next day my hands were like one big blister. We went to this 24-hour emergency place and I remember, as a joke, I'm like, "So, I'm not going to lose my hands, am I?" And he was like, "Well, we'll see." I think that was probably the last time I did acid.

WHAT'S THE WORST ALBUM TO LISTEN TO ON ACID?

PIERREPLANE, DETROIT

I can't remember which album, but it was a Skinny Puppy record. It just fucked me up. I mean *fucked me up*. It was some girl, I was having sex. It was like a bad Rob Zombie movie wrapping itself around me. It was her idea. She was some goth girl with her Skinny Puppy and her acid. These are the reasons why I don't do this shit anymore. I was so much more rock-star when I was between 16 and 20. I was a complete, balls-out rock star and I got burned out early.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU THREW A PUNCH?

ITZAGAS, CARSON CITY, NV

Somewhere in the beginning of the second matchbox record in Kansas City. I go outside some bar and a guy has our guitar player, Adam, against a wall. I was pretty ripped, so I didn't even think and just grabbed him and threw him on the ground and started wailing, until the cops showed up. What did the cops do? Nothing. They were great, they were fans. That was a time being a celebrity helped me out.

HOW MUCH DO YOU HAVE TO EAT TO STAY FAT WHILE DOING COKE?

L.MANDRAKE, YPSILANTI, MI

Good question. Fuckin' tell me about it! When I used to do lots of coke, it would be just to stay in the game. You'd be tired and you'd do it just to stay out and go to bars and meet girls and have a good time. But then, three in the morning, you're coming down and you just want to eat something. There's a two-year period at the beginning of this band that I don't even remember. I can't even imagine what the shows were like. There were groups of road families that we had living on the bus for a week and they come up to me now and I'm just like, "I have no idea who you are." They're like, "We stayed with you for two weeks. We came to your house! We saved you from that fire!" I got nothing for you, man. Sorry.



"Of course,
my other
bicycle is a
Porsche."



Mick Jagger:
"Hey, that
tickles!"

IS THERE ANY KIND OF MUSIC YOU JUST CAN'T STAND?

CTG123, FRANKFORT, KY

I'm not a fan of, like, power punk-pop music. You know, the whiny, nasally-voiced punk-pop. I think blink-182 do it really well, they've turned it into something. But anybody else, I can't go with that.

WHAT'S THE BLINGIEST THING ABOUT YOUR HOUSE?

JOONBUG, LOUGHKEEPSIE, NY

Maybe just the size. I mean, it's not a small house and the kitchen is massive because my wife likes to cook all the time. But we tried really hard to make it the kind of house that, as soon as you walk in, you want to take your shoes off and hang out. There's nothing too blingy about me. I bought a Porsche Cayenne. But even that was done out of practicality [Blender: "Yeah, right"]. No, that's a *man's* Porsche. It's not like a midlife-crisis mobile. It's an SUV!

WHAT SHOWS DO YOU TIVO?

RAYRAY45, SUN VALLEY, ID

24. *Arrested Development*. *American Idol*. My least favorite at the beginning was that Constantine guy. But he was the one that really, I thought, grew and grew and grew. You know, I'm talking about *American Idol* like I give a fuck ... but somehow I do!

SEEN ANY GOOD PORN MOVIES RECENTLY?

LILDEBBIE, LINCOLN, NE

No, because my entire life now is Internet porn. It's nice and easy—hopefully, I'll never have to buy another porn magazine again. And my wife's one of my best porn partners. When you've got a woman that has a degree, loves James Bond movies and will watch porno with you, that's a keeper.

HOW DO YOU KEEP THE OL' SEX LIFE SPICY?

LETITREIGN, SEATTLE

Well, it helps that my wife's hot, I can't lie. You should probably ask her. Maybe I don't! Fuck ... [BLENDER]

The Greatest Songs Ever

BLENDER EXPLORES THE FINEST TUNES IN HISTORY

Metallica, left to right:
Lars Ulrich, James
Hetfield, Kirk Hammett
and Jason Newsted.

METALLICA

"ENTER SANDMAN"

BEFORE THESE SAN FRANCISCO
HEADBANGERS COULD RULE THE
POP CHARTS, THEY HAD TO KILL
HAIR METAL—THAT IS, IF THEY
DIDN'T KILL EACH OTHER FIRST.

BY TIM GRIERSON



BY 1990, METALLICA were the world's biggest metal act. But they wanted more.

Only nine years before, shy James

Hetfield and gregari-

ous Lars Ulrich were two L.A. teenagers who bonded over a mutual love of cookies, Jack Daniel's and Iron Maiden. Forming Metallica and relocating to San Francisco, the frontman and drummer soon conquered the '80s metal scene with a string of low-budget records that flaunted a musical sophistication unmatched by their peers in Anthrax and Slayer. Their fourth album, 1988's ... *And Justice for All*, earned them a successful yearlong tour around the globe: Without much airplay, an album of dark, intricate epics had managed to go multiplatinum.

The band were exhausted, though. Still reeling from the 1986 death of bassist Cliff Burton, the quartet had earned the nickname *Alcoholica* for their heavy drinking. They mercilessly hazed Burton's replacement, Jason Newsted, making for a tense, divisive atmosphere on the road. Playing live had made it abundantly clear that Metallica's music was suffering too: Guitarist Kirk Hammett once said of performing *Justice*'s title track, "I couldn't bear watching the people up front start to yawn at about the eighth or ninth minute of the song." Ulrich agrees: "We had pushed that 50-riffs-and-25-time-changes-in-10-minutes thing about as far as we could go."

Metallica dominated the thrash ghetto, but still got no respect from the larger music world, where pop-metal acts like Bon Jovi and Mötley Crüe were kings. As Lonn Friend, former editor of metal magazine *RIP*, put it, "They were a garage band who were supposed to tour for the rest of their life and that was it."

Deciding they needed a change, Metallica went to work on the self-titled "Black Album," which would spotlight the band's departure from mathematical thrash purism toward a more immediate—and radio-friendly—sound. Of the band's underground status, Ulrich recalls, "It was cool, but it also limited us."

After some much-needed time apart—Hetfield went hunting, Ulrich obsessed over fine art—Metallica began writing in the summer of 1990. In keeping with their newfound, pared-down approach, they developed a track from a riff Hammett had banged out at home one day.

"We wrote it in an afternoon," Ulrich fondly remembers about "Enter Sandman." It didn't have lyrics, but Ulrich knew immediately that this song—simple but gripping—would be Metallica's opening salvo. "We were taking everything

about the ... *And Justice for All* experience to the extreme opposite," he says.

Oddly—or subversively—Ulrich chose producer Bob Rock, the very man who had sprinkled hit dust on Jovi and Crüe, to give Metallica a big, brawny sound. Hetfield had reservations: "If you go back and listen to the stuff he's produced, it sounds great—even though the songs were crap and the bands were gay!"

Rock had mixed feelings too.

"I wasn't into their kind of music," he says. "I think that was really good; I never bought into the idolization of those guys."

Recording began at North Hollywood's One on One studios in October. When Ulrich wasn't reading *Barely Legal* or visiting the "dark places within a five-mile radius" during downtime, he watched MTV, noticing that the flashy '80s bands he detested no longer monopolized the channel. "You could sense people were getting fed up with the Warrant ballads and the fucking Bulletboys," he says. "I felt the tides were turning."

In the studio, the band and Rock enjoyed an unlikely chemistry of mutual antagonism.

Rock purposely ignored the First Rule of Metallica: Nobody tells Metallica what to do. "We'd sit there," Ulrich says, "and Bob would say, 'Play it again.' 'I just played it—fuck you.' 'Play it again, but make it swing a little more.' 'Fuck you—you play it again and fucking make it swing.'" The band members grew closer by tormenting the producer. "Everyone had pictures of naked women," Rock says, "but Lars would have a picture of some guy's dick. I'd walk in and go, 'Oh God!' So the next day, the entire wall would be dicks."

While other songs were being completed, Ulrich kept insisting "Enter Sandman" would open Metallica. Rock wasn't immediately impressed. "I thought 'Sandman' was ... OK," he laughs.

When Hetfield finally hit upon the song's lyrics—which juxtapose childhood bedtime rituals and nightmarish imagery—he included a line referring to

crib death: "Disrupt the perfect family."

After years of penning political lyrics, Hetfield had turned introspective, referencing his childhood growing up with a devoutly religious father and a mother who died from cancer when he was 16.

"Some of the things we tell our kids that are supposed to be soothing, aren't," Hetfield later explained. The other

members agreed the line seemed too dark

for a potential single, but no one wanted to violate the Second Rule: Nobody in Metallica questions anybody else in Metallica.

The job fell on Rock. "'I've got to talk to him about this?'" he said when Lars volunteered him for the assignment. "'Yeah, that's your gig.'"

Rock managed to convince Hetfield that he "might be

throwing away a song," and the line was

changed to "We're off to never-never land," a seductive invitation into the menacing unknown.

With its thick bottom end and propulsive riff, "Enter Sandman" dominated rock

radio in 1991, rising to No. 16 on the pop charts and propelling Metallica to a No. 1 debut. The album sold almost 600,000 copies in its first week and eventually moved more than 14 million units. Metallica proved that metal didn't need to be played by hairspray-abusing pretty boys to strike a mainstream chord. Along with Nirvana's *Nevermind*—released just one month later—the album ended hair-metal's spandex reign, marrying ominous themes to accessible hooks.

Ironically, some hardcore metal fans ridiculed "Sandman," accusing Metallica of hustling the same brand of pop the band members supposedly loathed. But the single honored the Third Rule of Metallica: Evolve or die. "We were shit-scared of falling into the trap of autopilot," says Ulrich. "People wanted to define us. Fuck that! 'Sandman' was the gateway to the next phase of Metallica." [BLENDER]

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG: "Enter Sandman"

ARTIST: Metallica

PERFORMERS: James Hetfield, guitar, vocals; Lars Ulrich, drums; Kirk Hammett, lead guitar; Jason Newsted, bass

LABEL: Elektra

PRODUCERS: Bob Rock with Lars Ulrich & James Hetfield

CHARTED: August 24, 1991

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: 16

WEEKS ON CHART: 20

WHO'S WHO

JAMES HETFIELD, 42

Perpetually scowling singer. His stint in rehab created memorable drama in the 2003 documentary *Some Kind of Monster*.

BOB ROCK, 51

Canadian musician-producer who's worked with Simple Plan and Cher. Has produced every Metallica record since the "Black Album."

LARS ULRICH, 41

Danish drummer who considered a career in tennis before seeing Deep Purple in concert at age 10. Went on to publicly revile Napster.





INSIDER

My Music

OUR FAVORITE STARS' FAVORITE RECORDS

YOU'VE SEEN IRISH ACTOR **CILLIAN MURPHY** OUTRUN ZOMBIES IN *28 DAYS LATER* AND TAUNT SUPERHEROES IN *BATMAN BEGINS*. NOW SEE HIM GO THROUGH HIS RECORD COLLECTION!

BY VICTORIA DESILVERIO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

"ROCK MUSIC
SHOULD BE
SEXUAL AND
ANGRY!"

THE ALBUM THAT'S

GREAT FOR IRISH ROAD TRIPS



**THE BEATLES
ABBEY ROAD**

CAPITOL, 1969

"My dad introduced me to the Beatles and they remind me of being a kid, driving in the car with him. We would go on holiday to West Kerry, a remote part of Ireland, and listen to this tape over and over again until it wore out. McCartney's best lyric is on this record: 'And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.' The simplicity and truthfulness of the couplet has stuck with me—it's an amazing philosophy to live your life by."

THE ALBUM THAT

HAS "ASSERTIVE HAIRCUTS"



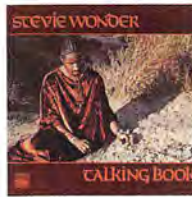
**KINGS OF LEON
AHA SHAKE
HEARTBREAK**

RCA, 2005

"I love this band! Their first album was great, but this is a big step forward. They're so young and unbelievably cool—bona fide rock stars! And they've got the most assertive haircuts. I'm in love with the way he sings and the way there's so much pain in his voice. And he yodels! It's full of brilliant, out-and-out rock & roll tracks. I hate bands like Keane—diluted rock music. Rock music should be sexual and angry, and these guys have all that."

THE ALBUM THAT

MADE ME FORGET "EBONY & IVORY"



**STEVIE WONDER
TALKING BOOK**

MOTOWN, 1972

"When I was 19, about 10 years ago, a friend gave me a tape of this album on one side and *Innervisions*, the album he made a year later, on the other side. At that time, I thought Wonder was only 'I Just Called to Say I Love You' and 'Ebony & Ivory,' his cheesy pop songs. So these records were a complete revelation to me. I listened to them so much, to the point where I thought they were one album. That's why both of them are on my list."

THE OTHER ALBUM THAT

MADE ME FORGET "EBONY & IVORY"



**STEVIE WONDER
INNERVERSIONS**

MOTOWN, 1973

"He has a new album coming out. It's just awful, the way most of the artists on my list sort of hit 1979 and were like, 'Oops! I've lost all my talent!' It's just gone. And Stevie's another example. That said, in November, I was in L.A. at this benefit at the House of Blues and he got up and did a piece with a harmonica and a gospel choir. Someone introduced me to him, and it was overwhelming. I was like, 'Man, your music means so much to me.' He was like, 'Yeaahh.'"

THE ALBUM THAT

INSPIRED ME TO BE WEIRD



**FRANK ZAPPA
HOT RATS**

RYKODISC, 1969

"Zappa was fucking crazy and he hated hippies. He was also one of the best guitarists in the world, so underrated. My brother and I had a band—I played guitar, he played piano—and this album was so influential that we started playing Zappa-style music and changed our name to Sons of Mr. Green-genes, after a song on this record. The label Acid Jazz offered us a deal, but we never signed. What we were doing was cool for about 25 minutes."

THE ALBUM THAT

WILL OUTLAST US ALL



**RADIOHEAD
KID A**

CAPITOL, 2000

"I was listening to this a lot while I was shooting a movie called *How Harry Became a Tree*. So it reminds me of that experience, but really I think *Kid A* will be thought of as a seminal record in the future because now everybody's doing bleeps and weird stuff and deconstructing it all. This immediately created a mood and there's not a weak track here. It's a concept album, I think. You never know what Thom Yorke is saying, but you want to sing along anyway."

THE ALBUM THAT

I WISH I COULD MAKE



**THE BAND
THE BAND**

CAPITOL, 1969

"I discovered them through Dylan, when he went electric. If I were going to try to make music again, properly, I would do it like them—no frills, no irony, just good music with great lyrics. I have always been a Beatles fanatic, but the Band are a lovely alternative to them. The Beatles were so conscious that they were pushing music forward, but the Band don't seem in any way contemporary. They transport you out of modern music. A real summertime record."

THE ALBUM THAT

RENDERS ME COMATOSE



**JEFF BUCKLEY
LIVE AT SIN-É
(LEGACY EDITION)**

COLUMBIA, 2003

"I love Jeff Buckley! This is music to fall asleep to, to send you to sleep feeling good. Or, if you are nervous on a plane taking off, this will calm you. It's a live album of mostly covers and him talking in between songs—just him and his guitar, showing off his voice as this God-given gift. He does a cover of Van Morrison's 'Sweet Thing' that's 10 minutes long and it makes you cry and think, 'Oh, what a fucking shame it is that he's dead.'"

THE ALBUM THAT

REMINDS ME OF DUBLIN



**VAN MORRISON
SAINT DOMINIC'S
PREVIEW**

MERCURY, 1972

"A lot of people would pick *Moondance* or *Astral Weeks*, but I think I overindulged in those albums. In 1999, I was doing the play *Juno and the Paycock* in Dublin, but I had a tiny part so I'd sit in the wings and listen to it on repeat. My dad introduced me to Van, too, and I'm a big, big fan. I love him because he's such a curmudgeonly old bastard, yet he sings the most soulful songs. He's a living legend!"

THE ALBUM THAT'S

COOLER THAN YOU'LL EVER BE



**ROLLING STONES
EXILE ON MAIN ST.**

VIRGIN, 1972

"This is pure rock, completely hedonistic—they went to the French Riviera as tax exiles, off their fucking heads, and recorded it in Keith's basement. I got to meet Jagger in Cannes last year—I had just seen *Gimme Shelter*, and I said, 'Hey, there's this cool footage of you jamming with Ike Turner!' And he said, 'No. That never happened.' I was trying to convince him of his own life! Then this blonde walked by and he was gone."

Ask Blender

SOLVING POP CONUNDRUMS SINCE 2001

WHO HAD THE FIRST MOHAWK IN ROCK?

KRISSY FRANTINI, RED BANK, NJ

The figure to first link the Mohawk hairstyle to punk rock was Richie Stotts of the Plasmatics. The freakishly tall guitarist for the theatrical New York punks—led by former porn star Wendy O. Williams—would frequently come onstage dressed as a nurse, a French maid or a Playboy Bunny. He also regularly smashed his head with an instrument until he drew blood.

The influence behind this resurrection of the Native American hairdo was Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*—De Niro's Travis Bickle character adopted the style as he drifted toward insanity (see the "Are you talking to me?" sequence) just before the film's climax. Stotts recalled: "It was the summer of '78. I was watching *Taxi Driver* one night, and the instant I saw Travis Bickle I thought, 'This is it. This is the look!'"

Incidentally, during the filming of *Taxi Driver*, De Niro forwent his usual method-acting style—the Mohawk was actually a bald cap glued to his head.

IS IT TRUE CHUCK BERRY ONCE GOT INTO A FISTFIGHT WITH KEITH RICHARDS?

HENRY POWELL II, BIRMINGHAM, AL

It wasn't so much a fistfight as a sucker-punch. Given Berry's bitter attitude to white bands that appropriated his style, Richards's relationship with his guitar hero was often strained. Indeed, whenever they rubbed shoulders, Berry would apparently order Richards to "fuck off."

On one occasion, as Richards tells it, Berry was leaving a New York club. Hearing someone approach from behind saying "Don't rush off," he took the Stones guitarist for an unwanted stranger, turned and punched him in the eye. "He didn't know it was me and didn't want to be bothered, but I got a nice note from him a little later," Richards recalls.

On another occasion, the pair bumped into each other at Los Angeles's LAX airport, and Berry allegedly threw a lit

shirt. Oddly, given this troubled history, the pair eventually collaborated for the 1986 live show and accompanying movie *Hail! Hail! Rock 'N' Roll*. Recalling

Richards and Berry: combined age, 417.



IS IT TRUE THAT WHEN GRANDMASTER FLASH RELEASED "WHITE LINES (DON'T DON'T DO IT)," HE WAS A COKE ADDICT?

DREW HAMMET, NEW HOPE, PA

Ironically, yes. The 1983 classic "White Lines" is one of the most famous anti-dope tracks of all time. But at that point,

Grandmaster Flash was indeed getting higher (baby) by regularly freebasing cocaine. Not that this necessarily made the song an exercise in hypocrisy. "At that time I think we were probably all dabbling in drugs," he later explained. "We were actually all fighting to get off drugs." The song is complicated further by the fact that Grandmaster Flash had no part in its making. Although credited

to Grandmaster Flash and Melle Mel, Flash later admitted it was solely Mel's creation. At that point, Flash's rapping group, the Furious Five (featuring Melle Mel), had broken up, and Sugarhill Records released the single under the misleading title to capitalize on the legendary DJ's name.

More confusing still, following subsequent litigation, Melle Mel went on to form his own Furious Five—which had not five but eight members—and to release tracks under the name Grandmaster Melle Mel.



his attitude going into the project, Richards remembered thinking, "Don't hit me again, Chuck, because this time you ain't gonna get away with it. There's a limit to hero worship."

I READ THAT THE FATHER OF MARK EVERETT FROM EELS WAS AN IMPORTANT PHYSICIST. WHAT WAS HE FAMOUS FOR?

JACKSON FREEDMAN SPECTER, COLUMBUS, OH

Incredibly, the father of the underbite-sporting alt-rocker was the man behind the theory of parallel universes. Hugh Everett III, labeled by *Scientific American* "one of the most important scientists of the 20th century," proposed his "many worlds" theory in the 1950s. The theory that there are an infinite number of worlds proved influential on the course of quantum physics and inspired an almost infinite number of *Star Trek* episodes. After leaving the field of quantum physics, Everett eventually founded several defense-contracting companies, becoming a multimillionaire.

In 1982 he was discovered dead by his son Mark Everett (a.k.a. E), which kicks off an entirely different story.

I HEARD THAT LED ZEPPELIN RELEASED A BOOTLEG CALLED LISTEN TO THIS, EDDIE TO SEND A MESSAGE TO EDDIE VAN HALEN NOT TO GET A BIG HEAD. TRUE?

REGINA WESTINGHOUSE, KANSAS CITY, MO

Sorry, but this often-repeated story doesn't hold water. The infamous bootleg was taken from a June 1977 show at the Los Angeles Forum, and its strange title has since been taken as a kiss-off to the young six-string pretender. But in 1977, Van Halen were still a year away from releasing their debut.

The bootleggers were actually referring to Lep Zep studio engineer Eddie Kramer. The title was intended to point out how much better the recording captured the band's full power than did the official releases.

YOUR QUESTIONS

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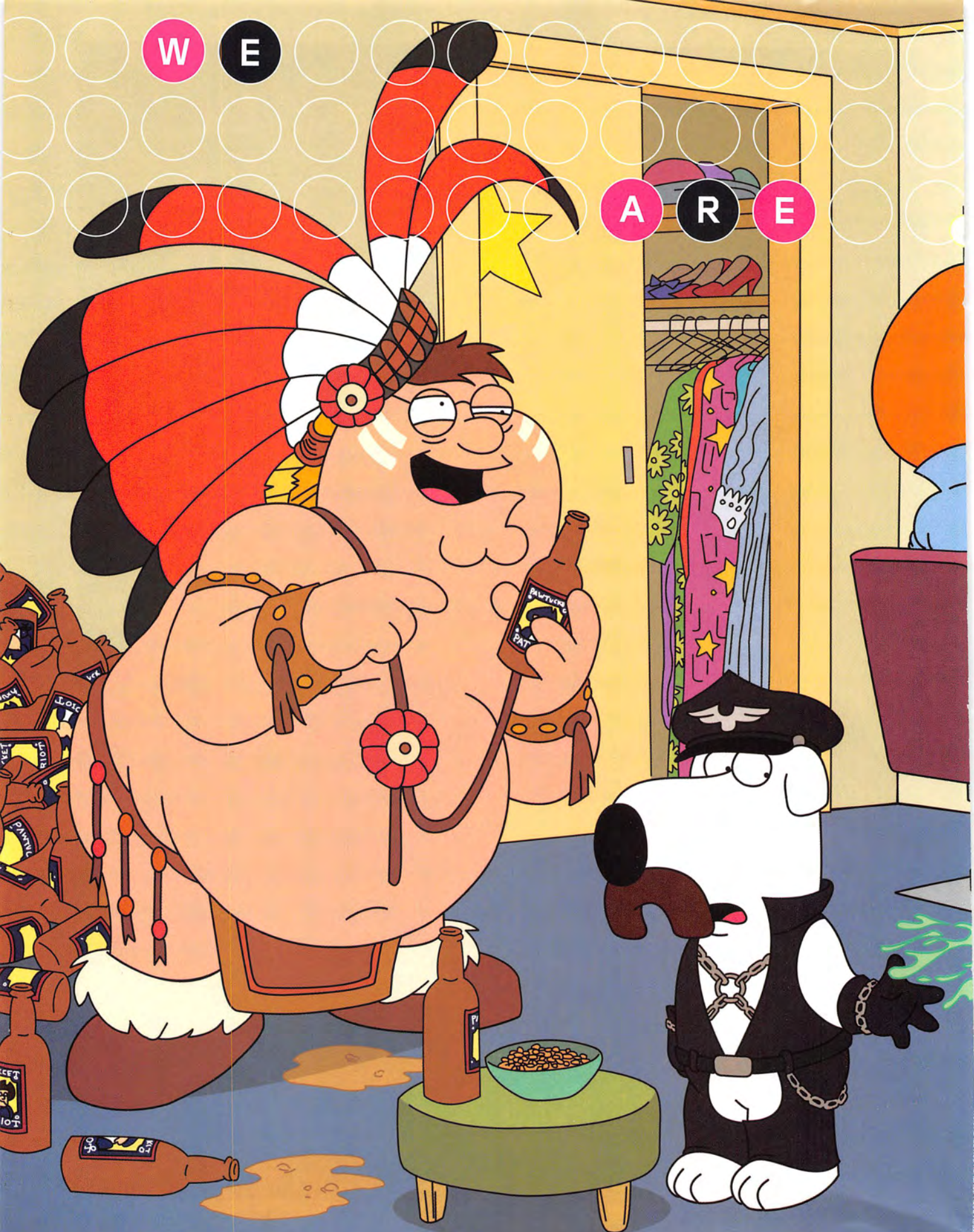
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FAMILY

BY CLARK COLLIS



TALKING BABIES. TALKING DOGS. TALKING *ALCOHOLIC* DOGS. IS IT ANY WONDER FOX SAVED THE CULT-FAVE-TURNED-COMMERCIAL-SMASH **FAMILY GUY** FROM TV'S TRASH HEAP? CREATOR SETH MACFARLANE TELLS *BLENDER* WHAT IT'S LIKE TO COME BACK FROM THE DEAD AND WHY IT'S OK TO TURN ONE OF YOUR CHARACTERS INTO A TAMPON

"HEY, QUAGMIRE,

how was Mexico?" asks *Family Guy* creator Seth MacFarlane, in the nasal tones of the animated sitcom's idiotic paterfamilias, Peter Griffin.

"Fantastic!" comes the reply, from MacFarlane again, this time channeling the character of Peter's sex-obsessed neighbor, Quagmire. "You know, the Mayan ruins are a fantastic look back at man's ascent. Plus, I banged this Oaxacan chick right in the dirt outside a bar."

Blender is hearing this exchange—although "exchange" may be too polite a word—in the course of the cast read-through of a new episode, titled "Whistle While Your Wife Works," of MacFarlane's Rhode Island-set hit animated series. Quite how deranged this particular show is can perhaps best be judged by listing what you've already missed: a performance of the *Family Guy* theme song in which Peter Griffin causes a dancer to puncture a lung; an outrageous breaking of TV's "fourth wall" by the Griffin family's homicidal, and possibly gay, toddler Stewie; a racist slur involving the conundrum of how Asian adults can be so slim when their babies "are

such chubby little nuggets"; and *Desperate Housewives* character Bree removing a large stick from her ass. Did we mention they're still only on page 3?

It is this combination of gasp-inducing, close-to-the-bone humor and relentless pop-culture references—plus a supersized serving of scatology—that helps explain why *Family Guy* is currently the most-watched show by the advertising industry's catnip demographic: young adult males. True, the episode's plot may ostensibly



Seth MacFarlane in action: the guy behind the Guy.

hinge around Peter Griffin's wife, Lois, getting a job at the brewery where he works. But that is really just an excuse for the show to hilariously and mercilessly riff on a multitude of subjects—from the difficulty of playing "rock, paper, scissors" with Edward Scissorhands to the all-round crapulousness of Craig Kilborn.

Moreover, the cartoon, which was once rebuffed in its attempt to book Priceline pitchman William Shatner as a guest star, is now hip enough to attract the likes of Drew Barrymore, James Woods and Robert Downey Jr. Apart from the show itself, there is also a *Family Guy* CD (*Live in Vegas*), book (*Stewie's Guide to World Domination*) and forthcoming made-for-DVD movie, *Stewie Griffin: The Untold Story*.

Not bad for a sitcom that, after being launched with much hoopla by Fox in 1999, failed to find an audience and was constantly threatened with cancellation during its original three-year run, only for the axe to finally fall in 2002. By then *Family Guy* had also been the target of a campaign to make companies withdraw their advertising from the series—spearheaded by the headmaster of the school MacFarlane attended in his native Connecticut—while Fox also declined to broadcast the Jewish-themed episode "When You Wish Upon a Weinstein" (although, in fact, that episode featured one of *Family Guy*'s sweeter scripts).

Indeed, the fact that there is a read-through at all today is almost entirely due to the massive sales of the show's DVDs, the first of which would become the second-best-selling TV release ever, after *Chappelle's Show: Season One*. "We expected the DVDs to sell maybe 100,000 copies," says MacFarlane, "and they sold about 3 million." Those sales, and the high ratings of *Family Guy* repeats on the Cartoon Network's Adult Swim programming block, convinced Fox, unprecedentedly, to reverse its decision in March of last year and order 35 new episodes.

"It's an unheard-of number," says Gary Newman, president of 20th Century Fox Television and a key figure in getting *Family Guy* reinstated on Fox. "Networks typically order 13. But *Family Guy* broke all the rules."

"Whistle While Your Wife Works" is the last of the 35 shows, and the opportunity to see it being performed this morning has attracted around 70 people to a large conference room in MacFarlane's Los Angeles suite of offices. Those present include producers, friends, representatives from the Fox network and the show's numerous writers, a fair smattering of →

iTOONS

ROCK STARS ARE FAMOUSLY PRONE TO ADDICTION—AND NOW THEY'RE ALL HOOKED ON FAMILY GUY ...



BENJI MADDEN GOOD CHARLOTTE

"The show is genius. Stewie: That's my boy! He's the smartest one in the family—he wants to take over the world and kill his mom. That's what my kid's going to be like."

SHOOTER JENNINGS

"It's the most genius show I've ever seen in my entire life."

GENE SIMMONS KISS

"The best thing about *Family Guy* is that in one of the story lines, I 'did' Lois. The second-best thing is that the husband actually thought that was cool."



JASON STOLLSTEIMER THE VON BONDIES

"My wife and I have bought all the toys. It's pretty obnoxious how addicted we are. We don't play with them; we just collect them and they sit in our toy room. They make us smile."

LEANN RIMES

"I'm totally addicted. I've watched every episode on the DVDs, and I keep watching them over and over again."

NIKKI SIXX MÖTLEY CRÜE

"I have the box set on the road with me, and I play it in my dressing room. I'll pause it, go on stage, blow some shit up and then come back and take it off pause while I sit there, covered in blood."



JT WOODRUFF HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS

"I really like how everything comes out of left field, like when they attack the smoking industry and have little kids say, 'Cigarettes taste happy.'"

PATRICK STUMP FALL OUT BOY

"For a show that's so blatantly unrealistic, it has moments more real than any live actors can pull off."

MATT ROBERTS 3 DOORS DOWN

"I think I'm responsible for bringing the show back—I've probably bought at least 20 of the box sets as gifts for friends."

OLIVIA G UNIT SINGER

"I've always liked watching cartoons late at night, since I'd usually be up in the studio. After I realized there's a talking baby with a filthy mouth, I couldn't resist."

SEBASTIEN LEFEBVRE SIMPLE PLAN

"It's probably the funniest show on TV right now. It's always one step further than any other TV show I've ever seen."

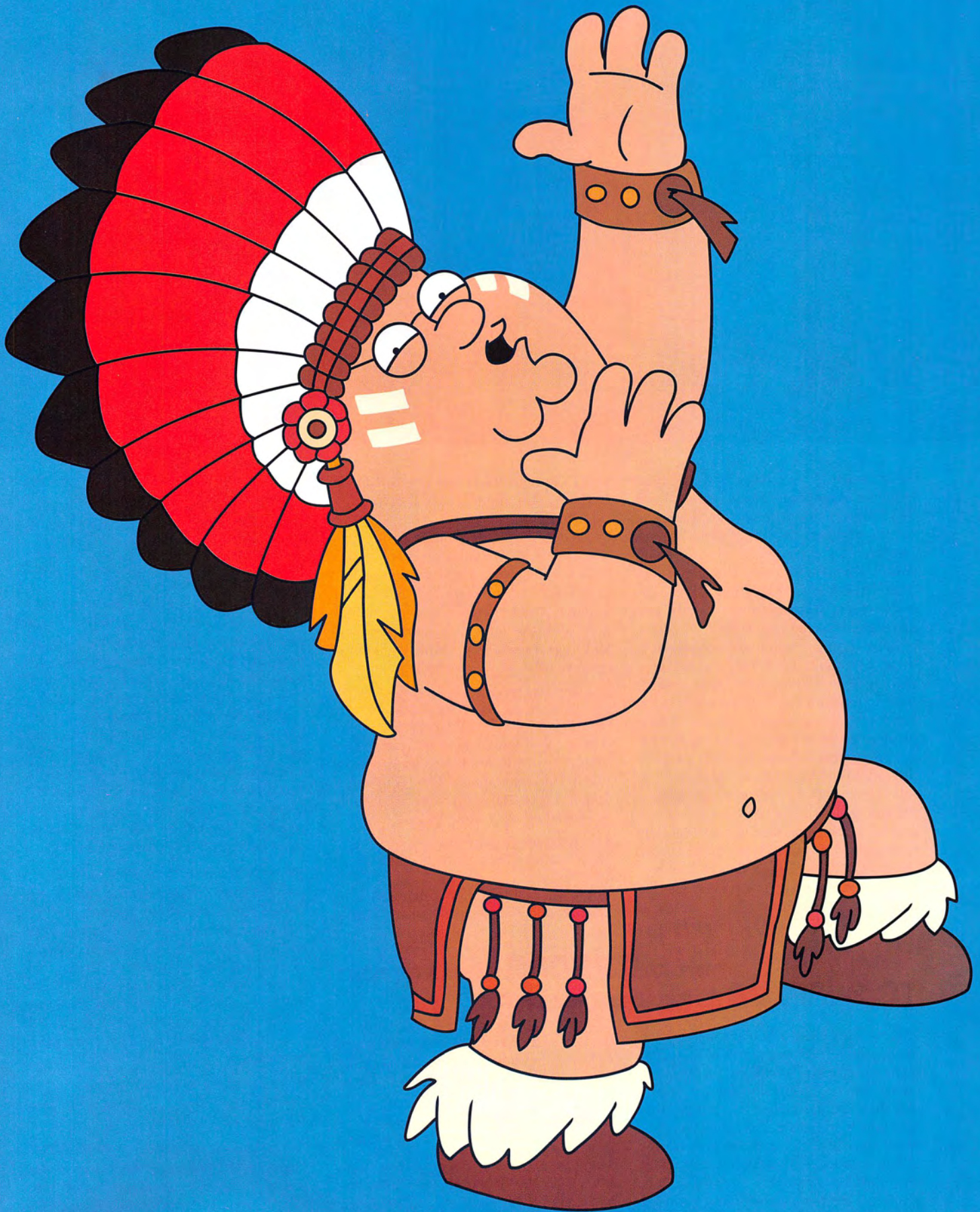
STEVEN PAGE BARENAKED LADIES

"I resisted the show at first because I'm a long-time *Simpsons* fan, and I thought *Family Guy* was just a lowbrow version of *The Simpsons*. But it blew my mind."

ADAM LEVINE MAROON 5

"*Family Guy* is the funniest show ever to be on television."





P E T E R



L O I S



S T E W I E



C H R I S

whom seem to have taken their sartorial lead, not to mention fitness regime, from *The Simpsons'* Comic Book Guy. Rounding out the principal cast, meanwhile, are former *Mad TV* comedienne Alex Borstein, *Austin Powers* alumnus Seth Green and *That '70s Show's* Mila Kunis, who play, respectively, Lois, cretinous Griffin son Chris and his sullen sister Meg.

But, despite the famous faces present, there is no doubt that the real star is the 31-year-old MacFarlane—partly because of his superb comic timing, but largely due to the fact that, as he also voices the perpetually plotting Stewie and the family's suave, martini-happy pooch, Brian, he often seems to be reading the whole damn thing by himself. It is also MacFarlane who decreed that the new shows should be every bit as offensive as earlier episodes, which regularly lampooned Catholics, Jews, Southerners, the physically handicapped, other "softer" TV sitcoms and pretty much everyone else on the face of the planet.

That *Family Guy's* take-no-prisoners

once, the network is unlikely to can the Griffins again, right?

Uh, right?

"There have been times in the past when I've said, 'We're back to stay—there's no way in hell we can get canceled again,'" says MacFarlane when, the day after the reading, *Blender* catches up with the tall, jovial animator for a lengthy grilling about all things *Family Guy*. "Now, I've kind of learned not to be so ... optimistic."

HOW MUCH CREDIT FOR *FAMILY GUY'S* REVIVAL SHOULD GO TO THE WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY OF MARIJUANA ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES?

A lot of credit should go to the ... fans of the show. They really did put us back to work, mainly because of those DVDs. For the first time in history, fans were able to pay money instead of just writing letters.

DID FOX SHOW ANY HUMILITY WHEN THEY BROACHED THE SUBJECT WITH YOU OF DOING NEW EPISODES?

Not really. Not that they really needed to. They actually had kept me under a deal in

know, be careful what you wish for—the show came back, with a vengeance.

THE *LIVE IN VEGAS* CD WAS BASICALLY A TRIBUTE TO THE RAT PACK. AND, ON THE SHOW, YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO REFERENCE BOZ SCAGGS THAN JESSICA SIMPSON. WHY DO YOU HAVE THE MUSICAL TASTE OF A 60-YEAR-OLD MAN?

My parents made sure that my sister and I saw *The Sound of Music* and *My Fair Lady* and *The Music Man* and all those classic musicals. I developed an appreciation for the sound of a lush, old-fashioned orchestra—those Nelson Riddle strings and that kind of Henry Mancini richness. I can't hear two guitar players and a drummer and get anything out of it. My music collection looks like it belongs to a 75-year-old man. You can take a Rodgers and Hart song and pretty much sing it in any style and it endures. I don't know that you can do the same thing with a Britney Spears song.

WHO WERE YOUR COMEDY HEROES AS A KID?

I was a huge Jackie Gleason fan. A big Woody Allen fan. Monty Python. *The Far Side* has always been as big an influence as any on the show. As for animated shows, I liked *The Flintstones* and Bugs Bunny and all the classics. When I was 12, 13, I did watch a lot of the same stuff that was maybe a little more mercenary that was fed to us, like *Thundercats* and *Transformers* and that batch.

DID YOU THINK IT WAS PANDERING CRAP?

No! At the time, I thought it was Shakespeare!

WHO DO YOU GET YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR FROM?

That comes from many members of the family. My mom's side all have a very, very dark, twisted, really sick sense of humor. I remember my mother telling a story about when she in high school. There was a kid in her class who was on crutches, and she and her best friend would take the rubber

"THE SIMPSONS HAS EVERY RIGHT TO SLAM US AS MUCH AS THEY WANT."

style remains intact was more than proven by the pre-credit sequence of the first relaunch episode, broadcast on May 1, in which Peter Griffin informed his family that they had been canceled to make way for a bunch of "terrific" Fox shows. He then proceeded to list 29 short-lived series ("Wanda at Large, Costello, *The Lone Gunmen*, *A Minute With Stan Hooper* ..."). But, given that the new episodes have garnered such a large, and lucrative, audience, Fox executives can probably bear a little ribbing. And even if ratings start to slip, one assumes that, having canceled the show

the meantime. So I was still getting paid well after the show was canceled. They had every right to cancel the show. It wasn't doing well.

IN ADDITION TO THE 35 *FAMILY GUY* EPISODES AND THE RECENT DVD AND MOVIE, YOU PRODUCE ANOTHER FOX SHOW, *AMERICAN DAD*, FOR WHICH YOU ALSO PROVIDE THE LEAD VOICE. HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU OPERATE ON, GENERALLY?

Not much. It's been pretty much a seven-day-a-week job for a long time. It always has been. But this time around, we're doing 35 episodes instead of only 22, which is usually the maximum you do in a season. You



B R I A N



M E G

things off the bottom of his crutches so when he stood up, he would fall on his ass. Which is really nothing short of horrifying. But you'd never know it—she's just the sweetest lady now. Then, one evening, my dad and a buddy of his brought home this audiotape of a guy taking about a 15-minute crap. They just put it on and laughed themselves into hysterics.

WELL, THAT EXPLAINS YOUR LOVE OF FART GAGS. There's kind of a belief among some of the more stuffy critics that shit humor is sophomoric and juvenile. But anything that's an honest laugh is legitimate. It's healthy, it promotes endorphins that are good for the body. What's the problem?

YOU WENT TO THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, WHERE YOU TOOK A COURSE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF STAR TREK. WHAT DID YOU LEARN? AND WERE YOU ACTUALLY GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY NOT TO GET LAID?

I wasn't going out of my way—it just kind of worked out that way. I didn't even have to try. As far as what I learned? I was a *Star Trek* nerd in high school and I think I probably learned most of it prior to taking that class. But, come on, who the hell wouldn't want to take a class like that?

WAS YOUR STUDENT FILM, *THE LIFE OF LARRY*, AN EARLY VERSION OF WHAT WOULD BECOME *FAMILY GUY*?

Yeah. The characters Larry and Steve were sort of early versions of Peter and Brian.

WHAT GRADE DID YOU GET FOR THE FILM?

I got an A in that class. But my instructors were very uneasy about the style of humor. Fortunately, there's nothing better than a college audience. So it played great. It was big laughs. And, actually, a lot of jokes from that student film worked well enough that I recycled them for *Family Guy*.

YOU WERE JUST 24 WHEN FOX BOUGHT *FAMILY GUY* IN A DEAL THAT GUARANTEED YOU MORE

THAN \$2 MILLION OVER THREE YEARS. DID YOU THINK, "WOW, THIS IS EASY!"

I did. I know better now.

THE SHOW GOT VERY MIXED REVIEWS EARLY ON. ONE REVIEWER SAID THAT IT WAS "CONCEIVED BY A SINGULARLY SOPHOMORIC MIND THAT LACKS ANY REFERENCE POINT BEYOND OTHER TV SHOWS."

Oh yeah, there's tons of those. Tom Shales from the *Washington Post* actually wrote that the building where *Family Guy* was produced should be burned to the ground, which was a little bit excessive.

DO THOSE KINDS OF COMMENTS UPSET YOU?

Well, what's always puzzled me about the negative reviews was that these are the same people who bitch and moan about how there's nothing original and unusual in television comedy—and that's what we're trying to do. Would they rather we do another *Home Improvement*?

HAVE YOU EVER BROADCAST SOMETHING AND LATER THOUGHT, "MAYBE THAT WAS A BIT TOO MUCH"? THERE WAS A SEQUENCE IN ONE OF THE NEW EPISODES WHERE PETER BECOMES A TAMPON AND THEN HIDES IN A WOMAN'S HANDBAG ...

Yeah, we had writers on the show who thought that was too much. And a lot of fans too. The older I've gotten, the more I think, "Did we cross a line there?" There are conversations that come up in the writers' room very often about "tonnage." "Yeah, that's a funny shit joke, but we have two other shit jokes in the script and it's gonna be too much, it's gonna make the other two less funny if there's more of them." And the same thing goes for sex jokes or jokes about religion or race.

ALTHOUGH IT ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE OPEN SEASON ON *DHARMA & GREG* ...

Family Guy has oftentimes made fun of the more traditional sitcoms for maybe being too soft. It's always awkward, because →

BEST. EPISODES. EVER.

OUR FAVORITE *FAMILY GUY* EPISODES—AND THEIR UTTERLY USELESS MORALS

"DA BOOM"

(Season 2, Episode 3)

After correctly predicting a nuclear apocalypse, Peter appoints himself to the position of mayor-for-life—and a doctor to the village idiot. In a live-action epilogue starring Victoria Principal, it is revealed that the whole thing has been a dream of her *Dallas* character, Pam Ewing.

UTTERLY USELESS MORAL: Don't bother eating Asian people. You'll just be hungry again an hour later.

"DEATH IS A BITCH"

(Season 2, Episode 6)

When the Grim Reaper arrives for Peter, he flees (Death: "I caught Flo-Jo, don't you think I can catch you?"). But, after Death injures his ankle, the balance of nature can be righted only if Peter kills the cast of *Dawson's Creek*. UTTERLY USELESS MORAL: You can't cheat Death. But, if you're good, he may give you *The Complete Boz Scaggs*.

"THE THIN WHITE LINE"

(Season 3, Episode 1)

Brian becomes a police drug-sniffing dog but begins snorting the evidence. After an intervention, he attends a rehab center so luxurious that, as Peter says, "This is where God would come if he had to stop doing blow." UTTERLY USELESS MORAL: It is indeed a fine line between Man's Best Friend and "Fido McCokefiend."

"TO LOVE AND DIE IN DIXIE"

(Season 3, Episode 12)

Relocated to the South, Peter attempts to fit in by pimping his ride *Dukes of Hazzard*-style and listening to country radio ("... that was Merle Haggard with 'I Kissed My Sweetie With My Fist'").

UTTERLY USELESS MORAL: Peter: "It really doesn't matter where you're from, as long as we're all the same religion."

CLARK COLLIS



Rule Two: Never get high on your own supply.

you never know when you might run into the people that work on one of these shows. In one episode Peter made fun of Larry from *Three's Company*, and Richard Klein, the actor, sent us a message that he got a kick out of it. People give us a bit more leeway because it's a cartoon.

IN A HALLOWEEN EPISODE OF *THE SIMPSONS*, HOMER REPEATEDLY CLONED HIMSELF—AND ONE OF THE CLONES WAS PETER GRIFFIN. DID YOU TAKE THAT AS AN INSULT?

It was definitely a slam. But, come on, we dish it out so much that, if we couldn't take it, we'd be dicks. *The Simpsons* has every right to slam us as much as they want.

HOMER AND PETER ARE QUITE SIMILAR ...

To me, Peter is much more similar to Ralph Kramden than he is to Homer, right down to his voice. That's what I see. But, because *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* are really the only two shows of their kind on television, there'll be comparisons made. Early on, I was very influenced by *The Simpsons*. We absolutely took a cue from them and learned from what they had done and hopefully took it to the next level. I have to be very careful what I say about *The Simpsons*. I mean, in its prime, it was one of the greatest comedy shows of all time. But it's not the show it was. It can't be. You can't do 16 seasons and be consistent. But some people prefer it now ...

IS IT HARD TO COME OUT WITH PLOTS THAT EITHER *THE SIMPSONS* OR, SAY, *SOUTH PARK* HAVEN'T DONE BEFORE?

It's a huge pain in the ass. The more shows we do, it gets harder—never mind the fact that *The Simpsons* has done over 300 episodes. And, added to that, the first act of *Family Guy* is kind of a mis-lead story; the real story doesn't start until the beginning of act two. And, in some cases, the third act takes such a complete left turn that what you're essentially doing is burning off three story ideas in one 22-minute segment, where, on another sitcom, they would only use one.

MEG GRIFFIN IS PART OF A LONG TRADITION OF SITCOM DAUGHTERS WHO AREN'T AS FUNNY AS THE REST OF THE FAMILY. WHY IS IT SO HARD TO WRITE JOKES FOR YOUNG FEMALE CHARACTERS? When you have a bunch of guys in their 30s sitting in a room trying to figure out how an adolescent girl thinks, it's very difficult. With Meg, what we've kind of landed on is a sort of Jan Brady thing where she's just constantly being shit on by the rest of the family. And it's turned out to be very funny. But teenage girl characters are the hardest to write. You know, I didn't understand them then, I don't understand them now.

WHICH CHARACTER ARE YOU MOST LIKE?

Brian. He's this overanalytical and insecure guy who looks for the answers in the bottom of a bottle. He would be the one.



GEEH vs. GEEH!

THE SIMPSONS AND **FAMILY GUY**: THEY'RE TWO OF THE GREAT TV SERIES OF OUR TIME. BUT WHICH IS THE SUPERIOR 'TOON? BLENDER ASKED TWO HIGHLY PARTISAN WEBMASTERS TO DEBATE THE VIRTUES OF THEIR 2-D OBSESSIONS

THE SIMPSONS HAS BEEN ON FOR 16 YEARS. HAS IT GOTTEN BETTER OR WORSE WITH AGE?

ERIC WIRTANEN (from *Simpsons* fansite nohomers.net): Recent episodes are just as funny and touching as those from 1994.

SHEA HOGAN (from *Family Guy* fansite the-drunkenclam.com): All the good stories have been done. There's been countless rehashing of jokes, the stories are pointless and the writing's bad.

WIRTANEN I don't see how the stories are any more "pointless" than *Family Guy*'s.

HOGAN *Family Guy*'s pointlessness is part of its charm.

ARE SIMPSONS FANS SMARTER THAN FAMILY GUY FANS?

WIRTANEN I'd say *Family Guy* is more lowbrow. *The Simpsons* doesn't feature five-minute scenes with the main character beating up a chicken. So yes, we're clearly smarter.

HOGAN You can be dumb as a stump and understand *The Simpsons*.

WIRTANEN I never said *The Simpsons* was highbrow, dipshit. There is simply more lowbrow humor in *Family Guy*.

IS FAMILY GUY EDGIER THAN THE SIMPSONS?

WIRTANEN Edgier in regard to lowbrow humor, yes. But *The Simpsons* still attacks groups such as environmentalists, the Catholic church, it features episodes about marijuana ...

HOGAN Whoa, the Catholic church. Oh my!

SHEA, WHAT DO YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO CLAIM FAMILY GUY RIPS OFF THE SIMPSONS?

HOGAN "Get your head outta your ass." *The Simpsons* rips off *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*—and lately, I'd say, *Family Guy*.

THE SIMPSONS HAS CHIEF WIGGUM, APU, THE SEA CAPTAIN ... DOES FAMILY GUY HAVE AS EXPANSIVE A UNIVERSE?

WIRTANEN Not at all. To be fair, the show's still young. If it lasts many seasons (which it won't), you'll see every other episode devoted to secondary characters.

HOGAN "If it lasts"? A show that was un-canceled won't last? Please.

DO YOU THINK IT'S A FAILING OF FAMILY GUY THAT IT DOESN'T TRY TO HAVE A DEEPER EMOTIONAL COMPONENT?

HOGAN Definitely not. Adults don't want to get lame emotional crap fed to them all the time. It's refreshing to just sit back and laugh your ass off.

WHAT IS THE SINGLE WORST THING ABOUT THE SIMPSONS?

HOGAN Lisa. She makes me cry on the inside.

HOW ABOUT FAMILY GUY?

WIRTANEN The fact that it uses pop-culture references as a substitute for humor.

FINAL QUESTION: WHO GETS LAID MORE, A SIMPSONS FAN OR A FAMILY GUY FAN?

HOGAN Neither. We're both losers.

WIRTANEN Agreed! **JONAH WEINER**



HAVE YOU EVER HAD AN EROTIC DREAM ABOUT ANY OF THE CHARACTERS?

Not yet. I think that would be a sign that I'm working way too hard.

WHAT WOULD STEWIE MAKE OF FAMILY GUY'S UPS AND DOWNS?

Stewie's very impatient. He'd probably have gone in to see the network executives—if he could reach the door handle.

FINALLY, IN THE DARKEST DAYS, AFTER YOU WERE CANCELED, DID YOU EVER WORRY ABOUT BECOMING SOME DRUNK IN A BAR GOING, "HEY, I USED TO HAVE A TV SHOW!"

Oh yeah, absolutely. Hell, I'm that guy now. I'm the drunk in the bar going, "Hey, I have a TV show!"

AND IS THAT AN EFFECTIVE PICKUP LINE?

Yeah! It really breaks the ice. The big difference is that when I would mention *Family Guy*, I used to get a blank stare. Nowadays, it's amazing. Nine out of 10 people have heard of this show, and the majority are huge fans. You know, it really seems that this time is the charm. But television is a fickle thing. Who the hell knows? [BLENDER]

YOU HAVE A SCREW LOOSE Let's see what we've got in the toolbox. 400 hp. A commanding 5.7L V8. Massive 14-inch Brembo brakes. And a startling 0-60 of 4.6 seconds. That'll straighten your head out. **Cadillac CTS-V**



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ROAD

SOLD-OUT SHOWS. RABID GROUPIES. BLOCKBUSTER SALES. SO WHY AREN'T THE KILLERS SMILING?

The Killers, left to right:
Mark Stoermer, Dave
Keuning, Brandon Flowers,
Ronnie Vannucci.



KILL

BY BRIAN RAFTERY // PHOTOGRAPHY BY PEROU



MARK: SHIRT BY GUIDO SHOES BY CONVERSE DAVE:
JACKET BY KENNETH COLE SHIRT BY COBB SHOES
BY DIOR HOMME BRANDON: JACKET BY D&G SHIRT
BY DIOR HOMME RONNIE: JACKET BY GUIDO SHIRT
BY JEAN PAUL GAULTIER TIE BY BEN SHERMAN
SHOES FROM SCREAMING MIMI'S



RANDON FLOWERS

wears his sunglasses at night. They are serious shades—dark and chunky, with the Gucci lineage proudly stamped on the side—and while you'd be forgiven for thinking the Killers' frontman is paying cheeky homage to the band's '80s-heyday sound, they are actually a form of protection: Everywhere he turns on this cool Cleveland night, the 24-year-old is accosted by young girls with near-weep faces and flashing cameras. They all want him to pose for just one picture. Or talk to someone on the phone for just one second. Or get him alone for just one moment ...

"Oh my God, you are so hot," one barely legal backstage-crasher says weakly, pulling up her shirt behind Cleveland's Scene Pavilion so Flowers can sign her stomach. Judging by his quickly executed scrawl, this is not the first time he's had to put Sharpie to skin—and it's probably not the last virtue-testing encounter he'll have tonight. With the exception of one kinda creepy fiftysomething dude who tries to

people, 'Relax. Put your tits away. I've seen 'em before, honey. No big deal.'"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE KILLERS WERE never supposed to get to the point where they'd be turning away potential tour-bus playmates. When the Las Vegas foursome were cattle-shot into the new-rock race last summer, the band—Flowers, Vannucci, bassist Mark Stoermer, 28, and guitarist David Keuning, 27—were perceived as well-dressed underdogs with sharp tunes; unlike their peers, they were neither dues-paying road warriors (Modest Mouse) nor critical love-lings (Franz Ferdinand). Plus, their synth-fattened sound was such a Reagan-era throwback, they might as well have bought matching A Flock of Seagulls jumpsuits.

"At the time, everyone was telling me, 'It's good, but it's too '80s,'" recalls Rob Stevenson, the band's A&R rep. "To be honest, I had no idea whether it was going to work. I just know it raised the temperature in the room for me."

When Stevenson went to meet them just after Labor Day weekend 2003, he had already been swayed by a five-song demo containing what would become *Hot Fuss*'s first three songs—"Somebody Told Me," the anxious *Rear Window* update "Mr. Brightside" and the keyboard-swandive plea "Smile Like You Mean It." The band had been together for less than two years,

selling their peers.

It's just the sort of fame-montage highlight that young bands hope for—and that very few are deemed worthy of receiving (Bono sure as hell isn't drunk-dialing Bowling for Soup, unless he thinks it's some sort of famine-relief project). And while it has afforded them a few spending sprees, it's made some of their personal relationships a bit touch-and-go. All have been with their gals since before the band took off, but at this point, everyone in a band—or with a boyfriend in a band—has read *The Dirt*. Flowers seems the least concerned with this—he'll wed his fiancé, an Urban Outfitters employee named Tana, this summer in Hawaii—but for the guys without a ring, it's a subject of much consternation.

"It's very difficult," says Keuning of his long-distance situation. "I love her, but it's hard. She imagines the worst about what could happen on a bus. I've been good, but she's kind of skeptical."

It's hard to blame her. At one point, *Blender* is asked to distribute after-party passes to any good-looking girls in the audience; for some reason, 200 hotties are required for a band made up of four devoted lovebirds. It's a task that *Blender* fails at, for just about every lady here tonight is accompanied by some polo-shirted dude who's had one too many Mike's Hard Lemonades; but the passes disappear

> "I'M VERY SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE WAY I LOOK." BRANDON FLOWERS

get past security with a homemade charcoal portrait of Flowers, the fans fighting their way to the dressing-room area are all females. Hot females, to be exact.

"When you're 15, and you're imagining this, it's part of the excitement," Flowers says after the belly-baring, sitting by the Cuyahoga River in the dead of night, his specs on the picnic table in front of him. "And then I went and got engaged."

In fact, all of the Killers claim to be happily spoken for—a private-life hiccup on their public rock-band status. In the year since their debut, *Hot Fuss*, was released, they've become one of the biggest bands in the world, selling two million albums, opening for the likes of U2 and Morrissey, and even kicking it with Bill Gates (which was as boring as it sounds). With those kinds of stats, you'd expect them to be using their tour bus as a giant orgy-mobile.

"We just try to be as respectful as possible," says Ronnie Vannucci, 29, the band's drummer and, so far, only married member. "You have the opportunity to roll with this kind of rock-star image, but it's more fun to go against the grain and tell

eking out a following despite some decidedly lackluster shows.

"The places we got turned down, they'd let anyone play," says Keuning, whose curl-down hair and incredulous smile makes him a dead ringer for *The Doors*-era Val Kilmer. "Our first two shows were at an Italian restaurant. We couldn't get a gig anywhere."

Undeterred by their none-too-indie local-music scene—the Strip is more likely to host Whitesnake than the White Stripes—the band members adopted a credo of "think globally, gig locally." "When we were in the garage and it was 100 degrees, sweatin' our asses off writing songs," says Vannucci, "we weren't thinking, 'What will dudes in Vegas think?' We were thinking of the world."

Within a few months of *Hot Fuss*'s debut last June, its teasing first single, "Somebody Told Me"—a number so ambisexual, Flowers thought it would be misinterpreted as a "gay song"—became a dance-floor hit and found itself on the rock charts next to Hoobastank and Bowling for Soup. Soon, Bowie was in the crowd, Bono was on the phone and the band were out-

nonetheless. It's like being in a Killers song: There's a hint of sex, a hint of violence and a whole lot of suspicious minds.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"HEY, ALL YOU assholes!" Vannucci yells, waving his hands toward the water. "Fucking losers!"

It's a few hours before showtime, and the Killers' soundcheck has been temporarily interrupted by a small-scale party-boat peeking its way behind the stage. The passengers are pumped, but they have no idea why—they merely gawk and repeatedly yell, "Are you the Killers? Are you the Killers?" When they get no real response, they wave some lame devil-horns and make some noise, prompting Vannucci's drum-stand send-off.

Flowers doesn't even notice. He leans over his rhinestone-studded, dinky-looking keyboard, dressed in all black. If Vannucci is the band's most accessible member—just last night, he snuck into an after-hours Cold Stone Creamery with some Columbus fans—Flowers is the most inscrutable. It has taken him a long time to get comfortable onstage, as anyone who caught →



Sorry, guys, but it
still doesn't spell
"The Bravery Suck."

MARK: TIE FROM SCREAMING MIMI'S RONNIE; SUIT BY GUIDO

LOW-BUDGET LAS VEGAS

the band's January *Saturday Night Live* appearance can verify.

"A lot of times, people want it all at once," says Stevenson, "and it never happens that way. The live thing will come."

Tonight, Flowers seems more engaged than he has in the past; all the backing lights in the world won't make the keyboard look any less dinky, but he uses it to theatrical effect, and his quiet voice turns into a bellow. With only four weeks off in the past year, he's had time to improve his live craft and to figure out that he should probably stop drinking before taking the stage (raised Mormon, Flowers nonetheless drinks and smokes, though the most tempting vice in his dressing room appears to be rider-provided peanut butter). And he's amassed a trunk full of vintage suits and jackets in New Wave colors, making him a bit of a glam-rock dandy.

"I'm very self-conscious about the way I look," he says, "and that's because I had four paranoid sisters always in front of a mirror primping and going on dates."

Flowers carries the band's success on his shoulders more than any other member, and it may be because he grew up surrounded by delusions of grandeur. He inherited his older brother's cassette collection when he was 12—a 200-album bounty of the Smiths, U2 and Bowie—and so his own rock role models have always been super-serious, alluringly aloof quote-machines. Flowers obviously wants to walk among them.

"I would be devastated if Morrissey didn't like us, or Bowie didn't like us," he says earnestly. "You want to make music for everybody, but they're the chiefs."

Recently, the big chief himself—a guy who knows a thing or two about indoor eyewear—gave the band a lesson on how to make a dramatic exit. "U2 were playing a show," says Flowers. "We were leaving town. Bono came walking out the door,

LOSE YOUR SHIRT AT THE TABLES? OR JUST SPILL GRAVY ON IT? HOMETOWN HEROES THE KILLERS PROVIDE A CHEAPSKATE'S GUIDE TO SIN CITY.

1 FEAST LIKE A WHALE

"A lot of the high-end casinos—the Bellagio, the Mirage, Caesars Palace—have a restaurant in the back of the poker room," explains drummer Ronnie Vannucci. "They want to keep you near the tables, [so] they comp you. I used to go back there with my poker-playing friends and eat really good food for free."

2 KNOW THE CODE

"Ask for the \$7.77 Special at Mr. Lucky's in the Hard Rock Hotel," says bassist Mark Stoermer. "It's not on the menu, but it's like a secret code for steak and shrimp: seven dollars, 77 cents."

3 GET THE HELL OFF THE STRIP

"There's a Mexican restaurant called Chapala's at 3335 East Tropicana Avenue," says Brandon Flowers. "It's my favorite place—the roof comes down, so it's like you're in the middle of a hacienda. It's real '70s and dark, not fancy at all. And the food is really good."



4 CLEAN UP

"The Stratosphere has free laundry for its guests," says guitarist Dave Keuning, "so you can go to the laundry floor and the door will be wide open. Or you can pretend to be a hotel guest, wait for somebody to come by and ask to borrow their room key. I still do my laundry there." BRIAN RAFTERY



"I WOULD BE DEVASTATED IF MORRISSEY OR BOWIE DIDN'T LIKE US." BRANDON FLOWERS

and he turned around and said, 'If you don't come tomorrow, you're going to be sorry!' That's all. Anybody could have said it and it wouldn't have had an impact, but in those glasses and jacket and hat—people like that are special for a reason."

But while they may be chummy with rock's elder statesmen, Flowers feels he gets a cold shoulder from his peers. It's a situation played out by this year's "I've got more cred than you!" spat with labelmates the Bravery, which has become the Gore Vidal–Norman Mailer feud for the iPod generation. The comments caused some grumbling on the bus ("I don't want any

awkwardness next time I see them," says Keuning. "We're gonna do some shows with them soon. We're not rap. We're not gonna shoot each other"), and has given Flowers a bit of a persecution complex.

"Maybe people just don't like us," says Flowers, sounding genuinely confused. "When we meet other bands, they're just never that cool. They think we're commercial." He does not offer any examples, save for the same fame-is-a-bitch mantra Vannucci spouted earlier: "When you're at the top, all the arrows are pointed up at you."

Whether or not the Bravery feud was the cause of some slight paranoia or the

result of it, "it's kind of over now," he says. "A lot of people think it was fake, because we're signed to the same label [by Stevenson], which is partly why it got started. I don't like that. I don't think he should have signed them. I want his attention."

Chances are they'll need it. After this summer—which will find them opening for U2 and performing at Bob Geldof's Live8 Festival—the Killers will enter the studio to begin work on their follow-up, which Flowers says will be "much darker." "It's coming from the road and the business and seeing how people lie," Flowers says. "We're very old-fashioned. We're into handshakes, and the world isn't." They also want to make a short-form film featuring three of their tunes, à la Michael Jackson. It could be their *Thriller*—or their *Captain EO*—but once it's done, they'll need to go back to the desert.

"We're gonna have six months off soon, and I'm gonna get really normal," Flowers says. "You have to learn how to do it. People cater to you." He has become a big fan of the film *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, which he sees as less of a documentary and more of a cautionary tale. "It was great they allowed themselves to be seen like that, but you also see the effect it's had on them; they almost don't seem like grown-ups." He pauses. "And we want to be grown-ups." [BLENDER]

longboard



shortboard

Please Drink Responsibly

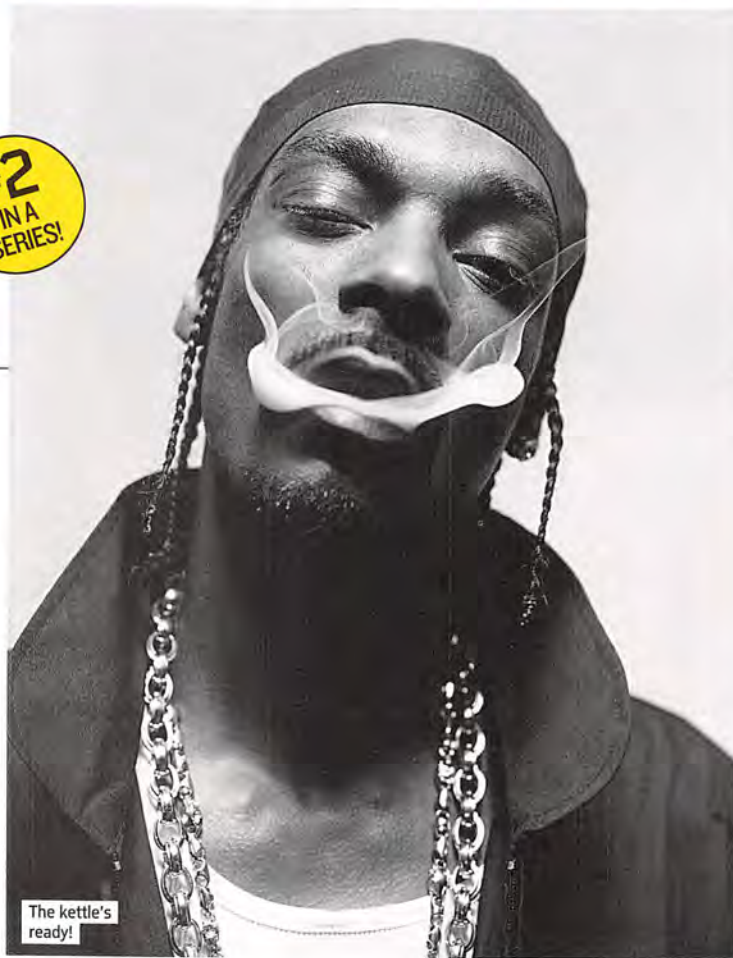
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ROCK & ROLL KNOW-IT-ALL

FROM JOINT-SMOKING JAZZBOS TO HEROIN-INJECTING GRUNGERS, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRUGS AND ROCK HAS, FOR GOOD OR ILL, BEEN ONE OF MUSIC'S MOST IMPORTANT. WHICH IS WHY *BLENDER* DECIDED TO CHRONOLOGICALLY CATALOGUE JUST HOW LONG AND STRANGE THIS PARTICULAR TRIP HAS BEEN ...

DRUGS!

#2
IN A
SERIES!



1964

BOB DYLAN introduces the Beatles to marijuana. "It opened a different kind of sensibility," Paul McCartney later recalls. "Instead of Scotch and Coke and ciggies it became pot and wine."

1960

THE BEATLES begin playing a series of residencies in Hamburg, Germany, where they consume uppers such as Captogen and Preludin, which they purchase, unglamorously, from a men's-room attendant.



1965

Beach Boy songwriting genius **BRIAN WILSON** takes acid for the first—but by no means last—time after a friend tells him it will "really expand" his vision. Instead he stares at a lava lamp for an hour and then plays the same note on the piano for another 30 minutes.

1965

San Francisco rockers **THE WARLOCKS** start playing the "Acid Tests," a series of LSD-fueled happenings organized by *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* author Ken Kesey. Later, while skimming through a dictionary under the influence of DMT, the band's leader Jerry Garcia decides they should change their name to the Grateful Dead.

1965

Beatles **GEORGE HARRISON** and **JOHN LENNON** attend a dinner party where their host puts LSD-spiked sugar lumps in their coffees. Harrison later recalled the ensuing trip as "like a nightmare that wouldn't stop. None of us got over it for about three days."

1966

BOB DYLAN releases "Rainy Day Women # 12 & 35" (druggiest lyric: "But I would not feel so all alone/Everybody must get stoned").

1966

Rolling Stone **BRIAN JONES** starts to have regular fits brought on by LSD. A mischievous Keith Richards makes matters worse by repeatedly asking "Is it the fucking snakes again, Brian?"

BY CLARK COLLIS



450 BC

Greek historian **HERODOTUS** records how tribesmen living near Mongolia throw hemp seeds onto a hot stone. "As it burns, it smokes like incense and the smell of it makes them drunk, just as wine does," he writes of what sounds suspiciously like a pre-Christian Bonnaroo. "As more fruit is thrown on, they get more and more intoxicated until they jump up and start singing and dancing."

1797

British poet and opium addict **SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE** wakes from a drug-induced sleep and writes his poem "Kubla Khan." The hallucinogenic verses will later inspire the Rush track "Xanadu," and maybe those nifty drum rolls in "Tom Sawyer" too.



1928

LOUIS ARMSTRONG releases "Muggles," whose title is the trumpeter's pet name for marijuana. This, in turn, may help explain why he found the world so "wonderful."

1937

HARRY ANSLINGER, first commissioner of the Bureau of Narcotics, warns Congress that "coloreds with big lips" are "luring white women with jazz and marijuana." He calls pot "the most violence-causing drug in the history of mankind." In response, Congress takes the first step toward outlawing it with the Marihuana Tax Act.



1940

Jazz saxophonist and drug dealer **MILTON "MEZZ" MEZZROW** is sent to prison for three years for selling marijuana.

1959

Jazz singer, alcoholic and drug addict **BILLIE HOLIDAY** is hospitalized suffering from heart and liver problems. While undergoing treatment, she is arrested after a quantity of cocaine is discovered in her tissue box. Nearly two months after being admitted, she dies.

1955

Jazz saxophonist and longtime heroin addict **CHARLIE PARKER** dies at the age of 34—not in his fifties, which is what the coroner who conducts the autopsy on Parker's drug-ravaged body estimates he is.

1954

Author **ALDOUS HUXLEY** publishes *The Doors of Perception*, which describes his experience taking mescaline. The similarly hallucinogen-friendly Jim Morrison will later name his band the Doors in tribute.

1943

KEITH RICHARDS is born.

1943

LSD is created by scientist **ALBERT HOFFMAN**, who accidentally ingests it through his fingers. He is subsequently forced to lie down and sinks into a "not unpleasant, intoxicated condition characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination."



1967

THE BEATLES release Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Included among its tracks is "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds," a song the remarkably straight-faced John Lennon maintains is not about acid but was rather inspired by one of son Julian's drawings.

1967

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND AND NICO release their self-titled album, which includes the drug-dealer-oriented "I'm Waiting for the Man" and the heroin-oriented "Heroin."

1968

Pink Floyd's erratic, acid-taking frontman, **SYD BARRETT**, is effectively fired from the band when the rest of the group decide not to pick him up on the way to a show in Southampton, England. He will make two solo albums before becoming a permanent recluse.



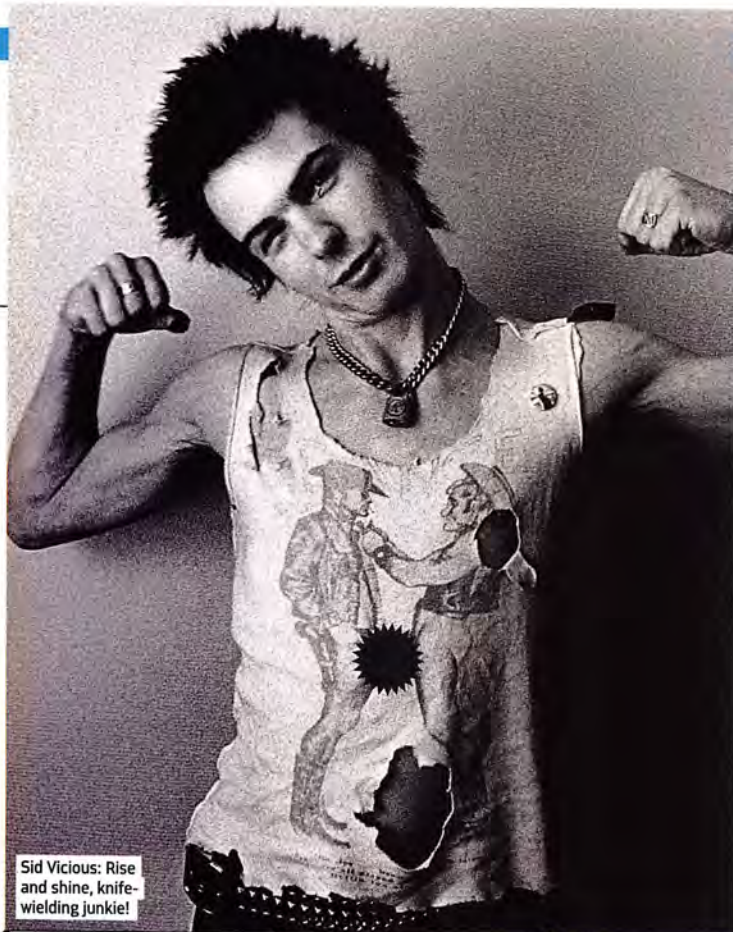
1969

At the Woodstock festival, **CARLOS SANTANA** takes mescaline, assuming, wrongly, that he will have plenty of time to come down before he has to play his set. "It was pretty scary," he will later tell *Blender*. "Especially when the neck of your guitar is dancing like a snake."

1970

JANIS JOPLIN dies from a heroin overdose in a Los Angeles hotel. Her body is not found for almost a day.





Sid Vicious: Rise and shine, knife-wielding junkie!



1970

Burger fiend and pill-popper **ELVIS PRESLEY** writes to President Richard Nixon asking to be named a federal agent at large so that he can better combat the country's drug problems. The pair subsequently meet at the White House, where Presley is given a badge from the bureau of narcotics.

1970

JIMI HENDRIX overdoses on a mixture of alcohol, amphetamines, downers, tranquilizers and a prescription drug, Vesparax. He chokes to death on his own vomit.



1981

Pre-fame (but by no means pre-drug) **MÖTLEY CRÜE** members Nikki Sixx, Tommy Lee and Vince Neil move into a building near L.A.'s Whiskey A Go-Go club, where, according to Neil, "every night after we played, half the crowd would come back to our house and drink and do blow, Percodan, Quaaludes and whatever else we could get for free."

1981

Washington, D.C., hardcore band **MINOR THREAT** release the anti-drug track "Straight Edge" (anti-druggiest lyric: "Laugh at the thought of eating 'ludes/Laugh at the thought of sniffing glue/Always gonna keep in touch/Never want to use a crutch.") The track will inspire the clean-living movement of the same name.

1978

At New York's Chelsea Hotel, the Sex Pistols' **SID VICIOUS** awakens from a drug-induced stupor to find girlfriend Nancy Spungen stabbed to death with Vicious's knife. He later tells police, "I did it because I'm a dirty dog," but there is doubt whether he committed the crime. He is still awaiting trial four months later when he dies of a heroin overdose.

1978

The Who drummer **KEITH MOON** fatally overdoses after consuming "a bucket of pills." Ironically, the pills in question are a prescription drug called Heminevrin, which he has been taking in an attempt to cure his chronic alcoholism.

1977

ELVIS PRESLEY dies of cardiac arrhythmia. The postmortem reveals traces of a dozen drugs in his bloodstream, including codeine, Quaaludes, Valium, Valmid, Placidyl, pentobarbital, butabarbital and phenobarbital.



1982

Hippie drug fiend **DAVID CROSBY** is arrested in a Dallas nightclub for possessing cocaine and a firearm.

1982

NEW ORDER's label **FACTORY RECORDS** opens the Hacienda in Manchester, England. Initially it's a failure, but the club's Ecstasy-fueled raves birth the pill-crazy "Madchester" scene, from which spring the Stone Roses and the Happy Mondays. The club also attracts armed drug dealers, whose presence will hasten the club's 1997 demise.



1983

Declaring that drugs could destroy "our whole next generation," first lady **NANCY REAGAN** launches her "Just Say No" campaign. Music stars who will later support her efforts include LaToya Jackson and, somewhat ironically, Whitney Houston.

1983

Freebase addict **GRANDMASTER FLASH** releases the anti-coke classic "White Lines (Don't Don't Do It)"

1984

OSZY OSBOURNE, while on tour with Mötley Crüe, snorts a line of ants after running out of cocaine.





1973

In the wake of his acid experiences, **BRIAN WILSON**'s brain effectively turns to blanc-mange. Increasingly reclusive, Wilson develops a serious cocaine addiction, starts snorting heroin and balloons to 250 pounds. In the next three years he fails to deliver a single song to the Beach Boys.

1973

Country-rocker and Stones buddy **GRAM PARSONS** dies from a drug overdose, proving once and for all that you should never try to keep up with Keith Richards's drug intake.



1973

Record-company executive and cocaine abuser **NEIL BOGART** forms Casablanca Records, the most drug-drenched label of all time. "If you were into drugs," one employee will later recall, "you were in Camelot." Every afternoon a young assistant visits executives and takes their narcotic orders. The company will enjoy huge success with Kiss but not so much with Godz and Bugs Tomorrow.



1976

FLEETWOOD MAC spend months recording the classic *Rumours*. Their perfectionism is fueled by "yards and yards" of cocaine. Christine McVie would later recall, "It was quite natural to walk around with a great old sack of cocaine in your pocket and do these huge rails, popping acid, making hash cookies."



1977

STUDIO 54 opens in New York. The disco era's most famous club becomes infamous for having every bit as lax an attitude towards drug use as you might expect from an establishment whose décor includes a massive silver spoon.

1977

AEROSMITH convene in upstate New York to record *Draw the Line*, the follow-up to their massively successful *Rocks*. The plan, producer Jack Douglas will explain, "was for them to stay away from drugs." It fails. Heroin addict Steven Tyler is routinely forced to cover one eye because he is seeing double—or, on one occasion, triple. The album flops.

1976

Queens punk originators **THE RAMONES** release "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue."

1976

PETER TOSH releases the marijuana-extolling "Legalize It" (druggiest lyric: "Singers smoke it/And players of instruments, too/Legalize it, yea-ah yea-ah/That's the best thing you can do.")



1987

NIKKI SIXX overdoses and is declared clinically dead, but recovers. The European leg of Mötley Crüe's tour is subsequently canceled, with the excuse given that there is too much snow—not up Crüe members' noses but on venue roofs.

1987

GUNS N' ROSES release their debut album, *Appetite for Destruction*, which includes two, count 'em, two songs that name-check heroin: "Mr. Brownstone" and "My Michelle."



1988

Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist **HILLEL SLOVAK** dies from a heroin overdose. His replacement, John Frusciante, will say "screw you, learning curve!" by also abusing the drug.

1989

The *New York Times* declares that the worsening crack epidemic is threatening the failure of all civilized life. Those who fail to help the situation include a pre-fame **JAY-Z** and **SNOOP DOGG**, both of whom will deal the drug.

1989

The Houston-based "Sizzurp" scene is born when **DJ SCREW** (Robert Davis Jr.) makes the first of his slowed-down hip-hop mix-tapes. Over the next decade, hundreds more will follow, eagerly bought by rap fans, many of whom, like Screw himself, are drinking codeine-infused cough syrup.



Don't worry, Kurt—we can add pupils in Photoshop.



1990

In a non-doctor-approved attempt to ease his chronic stomach pain, future grunge icon **KURT COBAIN** shoots heroin for the first time. He subsequently writes in his diary that he has decided to become a junkie.

1991

Former New York Doll **JOHNNY THUNDERS** dies from an overdose of cocaine and methadone.



2001

SCOTT WEILAND discovers that what happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas when he is arrested for pushing his wife against a wall after she attempts to prevent his buying prescription drugs.

2001

AFROMAN releases the novelty hit "Because I Got High."

2000

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE release "Feel Good Hit of the Summer" (druggiest lyric: "Nicotine, valium, Vicodin, marijuana, Ecstasy and alcohol/C-c-c-c-cocaine").

2000

Houston rapper **BIG MOE** releases the cough-syrup-oriented CD *The City of Syrup*. Six months later, his mentor, "sizzurp" pioneer DJ Screw, dies of a codeine overdose.

1999

OL' DIRTY BASTARD is arrested by police, who find him in possession of 20 bags of cocaine. A distressed ODB tries to convince the cops that, as children "look up" to the Wu-Tang rapper, perhaps they can make the drugs "disappear." They don't.



2002

Weed dealers across America weep like children when longtime herbalist **SNOOP DOGG** announces that he has quit smoking pot.



2002

On *Primetime Live*, a distressed-looking **WHITNEY HOUSTON** responds to Diane Sawyer's questions about her drug use by admitting, "I grant you, I partied." But the diva denies rumors that she has become addicted to crack, explaining that she makes "too much money" to smoke the drug.

2002

In Las Vegas, Who bassist **JOHN ENTWISTLE** dies from heart disease exacerbated by cocaine use.



2002

Bassist **DEE DEE RAMONE** dies from a heroin overdose.



1991

REDMAN releases "How to Roll a Blunt." Druggiest lyric: "Lick the blunt and then the Phillie blunt middle you split/Don't have a razor blade, use ya fuckin' fingertips."



1992

Toto drummer **JEFF PORCARO** dies. At first it is reported that Porcaro had become ill after applying pesticides to his lawn, but it will later be announced by the coroner that his demise was thanks to a cocaine-induced hardening of the arteries.

1992

DR. DRE releases his weed-lovin' debut solo album, *The Chronic*. It will go on to sell more than five million copies.



1993

Militant marijuana rappers **CYPRESS HILL** release *Hits From the Bong*.

1993

DEPECHE MODE lead singer Dave Gahan's weight drops to just 100 pounds in the course of the band's narco-blitzed 14-month *Songs of Faith and Devotion* world tour.



1998

Stone Temple Pilots singer **SCOTT WEILAND** is arrested in New York in possession of heroin. "I just bought some drugs," he tells the police, unnecessarily.

1996

Sublime singer **BRADLEY NOWELL** dies of a heroin overdose two months before the release of his band's breakthrough album, which will sell over five million copies.

1995

Grateful Dead overlord and junkie **JERRY GARCIA** dies. Although traces of heroin are found in his bloodstream, a coroner's office spokesman states that the guitarist died from a heart attack and not an overdose. In one of history's greatest understatements, the spokesman also points out that Garcia "didn't take care of himself."

1994

METHOD MAN releases "Tical" (druggiest lyric: "What's that shit the niggaz smokin'/? Tical, tical, tical/Pass it over here/Tical, tical, tical").

1994

In March, Nirvana frontman **KURT COBAIN** falls into a drug-induced coma while the band are on tour in Italy. The next month he fatally shoots himself after injecting heroin.



2004

Shortly before the release of Wilco's *A Ghost Is Born*, singer **JEFF TWEEDEY** enters rehab for treatment of his addiction to painkillers.

2004

Almost 40 years after its release, **PAUL MCCARTNEY** fails to shock the world by finally admitting that "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" is, indeed, about acid.

2004

On his Comedy Central show, **DAVE CHAPPELLE** lampoons funk legend **RICK JAMES**'s propensity for drug-induced mayhem. Chappelle is assisted in this by the bassist himself but, seven months later, James is dead. The subsequent autopsy blames an enlarged heart due to the effects of multiple drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, Xanax, Valium and Vicodin.



2005

Rap mogul **IRV GOTTI** is charged with laundering drug money for a New York drug trafficker.

2005

WEEZER release the anti-drug song "We Are All on Drugs" (anti-druggiest lyric: "And the best of your days/Will all vanish into haze/When you're on drugs").



THE BLACK EYED PEAS ARE RAP'S REIGNING FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACT. BUT THEIR SECRET WEAPON IS **STACY "FERGIE" FERGUSON**—A FORMER CHILD ACTRESS TURNED GANGBANGING METH FIEND WHO FANTASIZES ABOUT DEVIANT SEX WITH JIM MORRISON

I'VE
HAD
A

BY ADAM HIGGINBOTHAM // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF LIPSKY

CRAZY LIFE



STYLING: DANIA UNDES FOR LUSGARETALONDON.COM; HAIR: FRANCES PAYNE FOR PRIVEE
AT LUXE; MAKEUP: STEVE DAVALL AT LUXE; PRODUCTION: MICHAEL BILLINGS



"I'M A NON-PRACTICING SLUT."



YOUR NEW ALBUM IS ABOUT TO COME OUT AND YOU'RE PLAYING LAS VEGAS. HAVE YOU BEEN HAVING A GOOD TIME IN SIN CITY?

I'm hungover right now. My family is in town—you know, Scotch-Irish—so last night we did it Vegas style. We went to the Rainbow Bar & Grill. It was very rock & roll.

WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST THING YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO DO TO PROMOTE A RECORD?

We had to go on Nickelodeon once—[Black Eyed Peas members] Tab and Apl were blindfolded and I got to mix a bunch of ingredients together and feed them spoonfuls of it. They had to guess what the ingredients were. I mixed mustard and syrup and corn and a bunch of stuff. It was disgusting. Apl threw up.

SPEAKING OF CHILDREN'S TV, YOU WERE ON *KIDS, INCORPORATED* FROM AGE 8 TO 13. AT THE TIME, DID YOU EVER THINK, "BOY, I'M GOING TO REGRET THIS WHEN I'M OLDER?"

Pretty much every day. We knew the show was corny. We would make jokes about it all the time. A lot of stuff we did I knew I was going to be embarrassed by: the lines we had to say, like "Jeez!," "Golly Jeez!" They'd write these things and we would just go, "Who talks like this? Holy shit!"

AND YOU WENT FROM THAT TO HANGING OUT WITH LATINO GANGBANGERS AS A TEENAGER. DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM THAT?

How to lie; that I don't want to be with a guy that fights all the time, even though that was attractive to me back then. You know, the more fucked-up the better. For me it was the forbidden fruit—*cholos* were always sexy to me. There was mystery there.

HOW DID YOU MEET THEM?

School—I grew up in Los Angeles, in a place called Hacienda Heights. It's suburban, but it's borderline barrio. There used to be a gang called Happy Homes. That's [makes H-shaped gang sign with her hands] the sign for it, by the way—I used to hold it up. Mexican *cholos* liked a lot of hip-hop, just like I did. I was the girl who bought N.W.A and Eazy-E. I knew every single lyric. Still do. And I've always been fascinated by guns.

WHEN DID YOU HAVE YOUR FIRST ENJOYABLE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE?

I had my first kiss at 11, with a guy on the set of *Kids, Incorporated*. He was 15. It was all enjoyable. I didn't really have bad experiences. I've always been a very sexual person, I've always had to hold myself back—I lost my virginity at 18. But that took a lot of willpower.



WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A MAN?

Then, I looked for all the wrong things. Now, I look for all the right things: honesty, integrity. I've had a lot of talkers that have not matched their actions with what they say. I watch for that right from the very beginning.

DO YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR PHYSICAL TYPE YOU'RE ATTRACTED TO?

No. I don't discriminate. I like 'em all. I'm a non-practicing slut.

IF YOU COULD SPEND THE NIGHT WITH ANYONE YOU WANTED, LIVING OR DEAD, WHO WOULD IT BE?

My boyfriend [actor Josh Duhamel]. No? OK. Jim Morrison. Because I would probably want to do a lot of drugs and have really trippy drug sex. He seems very creative in bed. I like that.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU TOOK ECSTASY?

Yes. It was sophomore or junior year. I went to a rave in downtown L.A. I had a crush on the E dealer. (*Laughs hysterically.*) Real winners I was involved with! So I took half. That was enough. It was fun—first I didn't feel anything, but it was my first rave. All of a sudden I feel this body rush and it's amazing. I start dancing for about five hours. I go to the bathroom and I start looking in the mirror at myself and that was fascinating. I had a crush on everybody that night—and that was it. I was brought up not to do drugs; I had a really good upbringing. So I kind of backed away from it. I didn't want to go into full rebellion yet. That came later.

DO YOU THINK YOU APPRECIATE SUCCESS AS A 30-YEAR-OLD MORE THAN AN 18-YEAR-OLD WOULD?

Yes, yes, yes—most definitely. Because I've had to earn it. It's been gradual. When you make it too fast or you're too young, you take it for granted and think it's always going to be there. I know that it can go away at any moment. I'm very glad that I made a complete mess of myself on drugs when I was not famous.

WAS THERE A SINGLE EPISODE THAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO STOP TAKING CRYSTAL METH?

There were a lot of things; I've had a crazy life. But there was a single day. I ended up in a Korean church on Wilshire, very paranoid, thinking that the FBI was after me. I was walking around the church, crying, hallucinating ... I ended up getting kicked out of the church and thinking OK, if the FBI is outside right now, then all of the things that are in my head are real. If the FBI is not outside this church, then I'm trippin', and I'm going crazy and I need to stop this. So I walked out and there was no FBI, and I realized right then and there that—Maybe. It. Was. The. Drugs. And I said, OK, you've had your fun. Party's over.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER READ ABOUT YOURSELF?

After the Super Bowl, Howard Stern said, "Well, she looks great. It doesn't matter that she can't sing." And I'm thinking, "Is he fucking kidding me?" My voice—that's the one thing that I cherish. That hurt my feelings.

WHAT'S THE COOLEST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

Being the voice of Sally for a *Peanuts* cartoon. I actually have a thing that Charles Schulz wrote me. He drew Snoopy and it says, "To our best Sally ever—Schulz." That's cool! Schulz called me the best Sally ever.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPRESSIVE THING YOU'VE EVER GOTTEN FOR FREE?

A Hummer. We did a big corporate show and we got Hummers. And—ooh—I got rims for free. I'm very happy about my rims. They're called Asanti. Very chromed out—they're not spinners. My car's got a very nice set of braces.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE MISTAKEN FOR SOMEBODY ELSE?

A guy the other week asked me if I was in Outkast. I don't know where he got that from. I told him yes. [BLENDER]



"THE SHIELD'S A
BIT MUCH ...
BUT THE SKIRT
FEELS NICE."

"NOTE TO
SELF: FIRE
PUBLICIST."

All-American Rejects,
left to right: Mike
Kennerty, Chris Gaylor,
Nick Wheeler, Tyson Ritter.

"WENCHES BE HATETH WHITE SOCKS!"

WHAT DO OKLAHOMA POP-PUNKS
ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS NEED *BLENDER*'S \$848 FOR? TO
THROW A COMING-OUT PARTY FOR THEIR "INNER
DORKS" AT MEDIEVAL TIMES, OF COURSE!

BY JONAH WEINER // PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

"DUDE," Tyson Ritter whispers, sliding into a pair of black spandex leggings. "I'm not wearing underwear today."

It's late afternoon in central Florida, and the All-American Rejects have descended on the city of Kissimmee for a specially arranged crash course in swordsmanship and the opportunity to dress like extras from *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*. Their classroom is Medieval Times—the theme-park-cum-restaurant where hairy men joust for the benefit of chicken-gnawing, mead- (or Pepsi-) guzzling patrons—but the band's 21-year-old singer has apparently forgotten about the Arthurian dress code.

"I think these accentuate the junk nicely," says guitarist Nick Wheeler, 22, who is also going commando.

"At least you wore black socks," mutters 26-year-old drummer Chris Gaylor, stepping out from the cubicle in which he's been changing to reveal a bizarre juxtaposition: a faux-chainmail leotard tucked into bright white running socks.

"Wenches be hateth white socks!" Ritter chides, shaking his head.

The All-American Rejects boast a platinum debut album, a sophomore-jinx-busting new album (*Move Along*) and a legion of squealing teenaged fans—but the band is, as Ritter puts it, "firmly in touch with our inner dorks." This goes a long way toward explaining why the Oklahoma foursome decided—very unironically—to spend \$848 of *Blender*'s cash at the 13th century's answer to TGI Friday's.

"In high school, I was way into Dungeons & Dragons," Gaylor confesses, before adding something about "armor class minus

8" that we don't quite catch. Indeed, the band don't want their looks—custom-made, it seems, for *Teen People* pullout posters—to fool you. They solemnly swear that, up until very recently, they were rejects of the highest order. Ritter, whose rail-thin limbs and chiseled features suggest Jared Leto in *Requiem for a Dream*, has told interviewers, somewhat incredibly, that he weighed 215 pounds freshman year. "I had a 40-inch waist," he maintains.

The promise of comely maidens probably didn't hurt Medieval Times's appeal, either. But no maidens are on site when the band—fully appointed in knightly garb save for their beat-up Vans and Converse—push through a thick velvet curtain and into the main arena, a sandy pit flanked by wooden bleachers. Instead, they meet the head

in an accent that falls somewhere between Sir Ian McKellan and Austin Powers. "Infinity!" he announces apropos of nothing, then imposingly hoists a battleaxe above his head.

Kennerty is Dave's first opponent. The guitarist's technique is weak: When he leads with his right foot, he stiffens up, swinging his mace in an unconfident arc that Dave easily bats away. Up next, Gaylor doesn't fare much better: He cringes when Dave slams his blade into Gaylor's, sending sparks everywhere and making the poor drummer vibrate like a tuning fork. Stumbling through the sand several earsplitting blows later, Gaylor wipes his mouth like a prizefighter. "I was on him like stink on shit," he grins. "I almost had him."

When Dave has finished off the last Reject (sadly, sans taunts of "Who's your

**"COOL! THAT'S
FRODO'S DAGGER!"** CHRIS GAYLOR

knight, who sports wavy brown hair, a fiery red tunic and one distinctly un-Medieval handle: Dave.

Dave is a tall, soft-spoken man who has kindly agreed to teach the Rejects how to carry themselves should they ever, say, find themselves in a Crusade melee. He presents the band with an assortment of weapons and a challenge to do battle. Guitarist Mike Kennerty, 25, selects a mace, while Wheeler forgoes a single ball-and-chain for a double, assuring Dave, "I can handle two balls."

Ritter, meanwhile, has taken to speaking

liege?), the band head back to their makeshift dressing room—an office of cubicles marked SALES & MARKETING that, along with the Burger King and liquor store across the highway, runs pretty low on medieval romance—and change back into their youth-sized T-shirts and hip-hugging jeans.

Upstairs, the band is stopped by Princess Esperanza, a red-haired girl in a flowing white dress whose real name is Eveleena. "They're one of my favorite bands," she tells *Blender*. "I missed them when they played last night in Orlando, and I was so →

GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS
AND OTHER FUN STUFF
WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT



PERFECT PATRÓN

AS THE TEMPERATURE rises this summer, cool down with a delicious Patrón Silver tequila cocktail. Entertaining friends? Try this Patrón Silver recipe for a new twist on an old favorite that's sure to make party guests ask for more!

The Patrón Perfect Cosmopolitan

1 1/2 oz. Patrón Silver Tequila
3/4 oz. Patrón Citronge Orange Liqueur
3 oz. cranberry juice extract
Juice of one fresh lime



Add ingredients together in a shaker with ice. Shake until well blended and strain into a chilled Martini glass.

TEQUILA
PATRÓN



The struggle over songwriting royalties turns predictably ugly.

bumped. But here they are!"

"I'm Tyson," Ritter says, dropping into a low, debonair tone and extending his hand. Ritter's songs are, with little exception, all about girls—crushing on them, getting your heart broken by them and, with a little work and a lot of melodic pleading, getting over them. Clearly, he's had some practice sweet-talking them, too.

"I know who you are," Eveleena answers with a purr, meeting his hand. When Eveleena's boss sends her backstage, either in anticipation of impending showtime or in defense of her chastity, Ritter reverts back to Monty Pythonese: "Wanteth to sucketh it," he announces.

At 6:30, squires throw open the main doors and the crowd spills in. The band, largely unrecognized by the 800 or so people milling around in cardboard crowns and fannypacks, are free to rummage through the gift shop. They snag a girl's tank top emblazoned with the word *WENCH* but decide they have to pass on a full suit of armor (way out of the budget at a for-serious-geeks-only price of \$5,800).

"Cool! That's Frodo's dagger!" Gaylor squeals. His request for a "Pimp Cup," however, is rebuffed by an unsmiling clerk who asks him if he'd like to see a "goblet." Meanwhile, Kenerty gleefully announces that he's found something to spend his share of the allowance on, and delivers what is without doubt the least rock & roll utterance ever made: "There are matching engraved gargoyles I can use as bookends!" More self-conscious about this shopping spree, Ritter slides a silver band around his finger and asks *Blender*, "Is this Elvish ring fruity?"

A fanfare of trumpets



Raise your hands if you love mead!

announces that the main attraction is about to start. With nearly \$700 worth of daggers, broadswords and dragon T-shirts boxed up and bagged, the band settle into the bleachers. Dave, our jousting instructor, re-emerges as "the black-and-white knight," whom our side of the arena is encouraged to boo loudly. Instead, Ritter shrieks "DAAAAVE!," throws up the devil's horns and attempts, albeit unsuccessfully,

to get The Wave going. Our neighbors in the yellow-and-gold section grumble and cast Ritter murderous looks, so he shrinks back into his seat and buries his face sheepishly in a bowl of soup.

A family passes by, decked out in clothing from nearby Disneyworld. Ritter looks up and shakes his head.

"Anyone can go see Mickey in his damn undies," he smirks. "We got to put on a knight's undies!" [BLENDER]

THE RECEIPT

SWORDFIGHTING LESSON	\$100
CELTIC GOBLET	\$120
ELVISH LOVE RING	\$44
HYENA GARGOYLES	\$68
OTHER SOUVENIRS	\$451
WAIT STAFF TIPS	\$65
TOTAL	\$848

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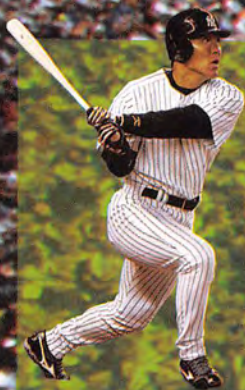
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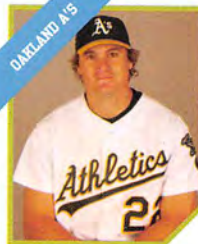
MAJOR LEAGUE
BALLPLAYERS ARE VERY
PARTICULAR ABOUT WHICH
SONGS ACCOMPANY THEIR
WALK TO THE BATTER'S BOX
OR PITCHER'S MOUND.
BLENDER MAY NOT KNOW
MUCH ABOUT O.B.P.
OR E.R.A., BUT THAT'S
NOT STOPPING US FROM
PICKING THE FIRST-EVER
ALL-STAR TEAM BASED
SOLELY ON H.O.T.
(HOTNESS OF TUNES)

HEY NOW, YOU'RE AN ...



BY DAVID PEISNER

OAKLAND A'S



ERIC BYRNES

**"DISCO INFERNO"
THE TRAMMPS**

Although he's always been tagged as a gutsy player who loves crashing into walls, it's not clear whether Byrnes is aware he's chosen the gayest song this side of "Y.M.C.A." or whether the chant of "Burn, baby, burn" just makes him chuckle.

MINNESOTA TWINS



MICHAEL CUDDYER

**"BEHOLD A LADY"
OUTKAST**

"Hey Ya!" would've been the pedestrian choice, but pimp-walking out to Andre 3000's funkadelic ode to "good girls" is a stroke of genius. Unless of course, Cuddyer, who's deaf in one ear, actually thinks he's walking out to "Hey Ya!"

NY YANKEES



CF

HIDEKI MATSUI

"TWISTED NERVE"
(THEME FROM KILL BILL)
BERNARD HERMANN

When he first arrived in New York, the team picked some music for Matsui's at-bats. But once he got comfortable, his inner DJ took over, picking tunes that show off a sly sense of humor you'd never guess he had by looking at his stone-faced expression.

PITTS. PIRATES



2B

ROB MACKOWIAK

"SANDSTORM"
DARUDE

You gotta love a guy who, during his infrequent at-bats, shuffles to the plate to the sounds of Finnish electronica. Proof that the 3 A.M. DUI he scored a few years back wasn't the only thing he took home from his time cruising Pittsburgh's dance clubs.

SEATTLE MARINERS



RF

ICHIRO SUZUKI

"ICHIRO!"
XOLA

Written and performed by a rhyme-challenged Seattle artist, a sample lyric honoring the Japanese phenom goes as such: "Pop up to rightfield/Yo, it ain't no thang/ Trying to steal second/Yo, it ain't no thang." Still—do you have your own theme song?

SAN DIEGO PADRES



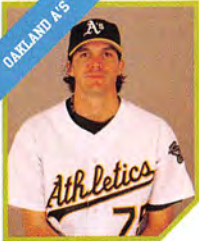
SS

KHALIL GREENE

"ETHER"
NAS

This clean-living Baha'i devotee had to yank Trick Daddy's "I'm a Thug" after it roiled Padres fans earlier this year. "The subject matter isn't conducive to the belief system," he admitted, "but I like beats a lot, and guys that have a little lyrical wit."

OAKLAND A'S



P

BARRY ZITO

"HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER"
DAFT PUNK

How do you go from Cy Young winner to sub-par meatball hurler in just three years? The latest theory involves off-seasons spent cruising Parisian discothèques looking for appropriate warmup music.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX



1B

ROSS GLOAD

"THE CROWING"
COHEED & CAMBRIA

Rather than resort to hoary classic rock or dreary nü-metal, Gload has made good use of his considerable time riding the pine over the last two years to find rock that doesn't fit into either category.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS



C

GREG MYERS

"SINKHOLE"
DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

A lesser-known track by lesser-known (but excellent) Southern rock torchbearers, "Sinkhole" is an inspired pick: a defiant, country-rock scorcher that encapsulates a subtle truism about the hobbled state of the 39-year-old journeyman's career.

RESERVE INFIELDERS

C // NEW YORK METS

MIKE PIAZZA

"SPOTLIGHT KID" RAINBOW

Even ballsier than picking something from these forgotten '70s hard-rock heshers is picking a tune from their '80s decline.

1B // HOUSTON ASTROS

MIKE LAMB

"ARMY OF ME" BJÖRK

Almost certainly, Iceland's greatest impact on America's Game so far.

2B // NEW YORK METS

KAZ MATSUI

"1, 2 STEP" CIARA

Further proof that not all Japanese musical tastes have been shaped in karaoke bars.

SS // CINCINNATI REDS

RICH AURILIA

"NO SLEEP 'TIL BROOKLYN"

BEASTIE BOYS

The veteran infielder serves up a reminder of his Brooklyn roots with each plate appearance.

3B // BOSTON RED SOX

BILL MUELLER

"TOM SAWYER" RUSH

Putting it down for all the Ayn Rand enthusiasts who pack Fenway for home games.

RESERVE OUTFIELDERS

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

SCOTT PODSEDNIK

"GODZILLA" BLUE OYSTER CULT

With additional walk-on tunes by U2 and Lil Jon, Podsednik either has extraordinarily diverse taste in music or a pathological need to please everyone in the ballpark.

CINCINNATI REDS

KEN GRIFFEY JR.

"CRUNK MUZIK" THE DIPLOMATS

Don't let the nice-guy rep fool you: Junior will get gully up in this bitch.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

TERRMEL SLEDGE

"SLEDGEHAMMER"

PETER GABRIEL

Granted, the joke is obvious, but when you've got the coolest name in the majors, you've gotta flaunt it.



Another Junior miss.

RESERVE PITCHERS

NEW YORK YANKEES

MIKE MUSSINA

"THE ZOO" SCORPIONS

Extra points awarded for picking something from the band's pre-MTV heyday.

CLEVELAND INDIANS

KEVIN MILLWOOD

"A COUNTRY BOY CAN SURVIVE"

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

It's a solid redneck anthem for a solid redneck, but some Hank Sr. would've got him a starting job on this team.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

BRANDON WEBB

"JAM ON IT" NEWCLEUS

A forgotten early hip-hop classic that would be greatly enhanced if Webb started doing "the Worm" in from the bullpen.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

BRAD HALSEY

"PERSONAL JESUS" DEPECHE MODE

Not sure if Halsey's allegiance is to the gloomy industrial-pop pioneers or to J.C. himself, but it works either way.

NEW YORK YANKEES

MIKE STANTON

"FANTASY" ALDO NOVA

Between him and Mussina, the Yankees pitching staff is working overtime to kick-start an early-'80s cheese-metal revival.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

MIKE GOSLING

"STINKFIST" TOOL

Nothing quite like a tune about angry, deviant sex to pump you up for a trip to the mound.

OAKLAND A'S

OCTAVIO DOTEI

"SHUT 'EM DOWN" PUBLIC ENEMY

Chuck D's lyrical bombs not only intimidate opposing batters but also helpfully remind Dotel what his job is out there.

DETROIT TIGERS

JAMIE WALKER

"SMOKE ON THE WATER"

DEEP PURPLE

Might be more appropriate if the veteran lefthander's fastball had any smoke left in it.



Don't ask, Dotel.

COOKING WITH GASOLINA

FOR LATINO BIG-LEAGUERS, ONE ARTIST IS THE UNDISPUTED MVP OF WALK-ON TUNEAGE

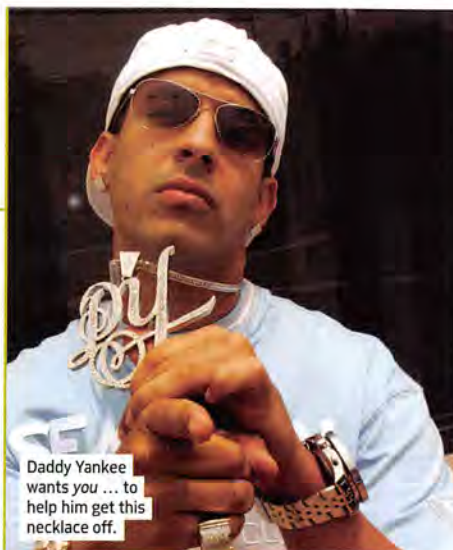


A trip to the ballpark these days promises a healthy dose of Linkin Park, 50 Cent and Toby Keith piping from the PA system. But one of the

league's most popular artists is Daddy Yankee. Born Raymond Ayala, he's the leading light of the burgeoning Puerto Rico-bred hip-hop/reggae/salsa genre-mash called reggaeton. And his breakthrough U.S. hit, "Gasolina," is particularly popular with the league's Latin players, a fact that doesn't surprise Ayala himself.

"The Latin community is proud of my music," he says. "It stimulates your body to do whatever you want—dance, play baseball, whatever."

Mets shortstop Jose Reyes agrees. "I wanted to represent my Latin roots," he says of his choice of Daddy Yankee's "Machete." And "Gasolina" fan Eddie Perez, catcher for the Atlanta Braves, admits, "Sometimes I stay at the plate longer so I can hear it more."



Daddy Yankee wants you ... to help him get this necklace off.

Growing up in Puerto Rico, Ayala was actually a fairly serious baseball player himself. In the early '90s he nearly signed a contract with the Seattle Mariners before an injury derailed that dream.

"That's what makes me even prouder about this," he says. "They're using my music in my favorite sport. It's incredible." DAVID PEISNER

The Devil's Rejects

Soundtrack featuring



CD SIDE

**LYNYRD
SKYNYRD**

**THE ALLMAN
BROTHERS BAND**

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Big B's Crocodile Dundee impression always kills.

THERE'S TROUBLE IN NELLYVILLE.

Brian "Big B" Jones, the 34-year-old, 450-pound, not-so-thin blue line that separates rap star Nelly from physical harm, is being crammed, barely, into the back of an LAPD cruiser. With B en route to the pokey for his role in a backstage brawl after Nelly's headlining gig at the Universal Amphitheater, his second-in-command must ensure Nelly's safe passage through the gauntlet of well-wishers and potential ill-wishers crowding the path from the backstage door to his Bentley in the parking lot. Normally, said replacement would be, like Big B, a seasoned, professional bodyguard and a brute physical force, trained to spot threats and prevent trouble before it happens. Unfortu-

nately for Nelly, said replacement is *Blender*.

For the past two days, *Blender* has kindly offered our protective services, eager to learn the ropes. And each time, B has politely declined. Partially because Nelly's security requirements for this particular time period—a canceled concert in Phoenix, an all-day press junket at the decidedly danger-free Four Seasons hotel in Beverly Hills—have been relatively minimal. And partially because, as Nelly's sole full-time muscle, he cannot delegate that crucial responsibility. And, it must be said, partially because, at 185 untuned and unthreatening pounds, *Blender* couldn't deter evildoers if we were carrying a machete. But desperate times call for desperate measures.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO KEEP OUR
BELOVED POP STARS SAFE AND SOUND?
NELLY'S BODYGUARD, BIG B, TAKES *BLENDER*
UNDER HIS MASSIVE WING TO SHOW US HOW—
AND HOW NOT—TO PROTECT THE
RICH AND FAMOUS

My Body GUARD

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STACY KRANITZ

IN THE EARLY '90s, only the Michael Jacksons and the Madonnas of the world had their own full-time minders. But with the explosion of boy bands and other pop acts with overzealous fan bases, and the boom in tabloid paparazzi hell-bent on landing that six-figure nip-slip photo, record labels and managers needed to step up security, turning bodyguarding into a booming, lucrative industry in its own right.

According to John "Q" Elgani, who's had the daunting task of looking after the Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, Britney Spears and the Olsen twins over the course of his 12-year career, average salaries for major artists' bodyguards range between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year, depending on the artist.

Even new, unheralded acts seldom travel without security; sometimes these guards are of the Big B/man-mountain variety, but more often than not they're stealth figures with military training, hidden in plain view, silent but deadly.

But that's not to say that personal security is solely ego massage—as famous as he was, John Lennon thought he could walk around New York City unaccompanied and was shot to death outside his apartment building in 1980. Nearly 20 years later, his former bandmate George Harrison was attacked by a knife-wielding intruder in his own bedroom. Even a lesser-known star like Damageplan's "Dimebag" Darrell Abbott was murdered onstage last year. And who

can forget Whitney Houston, who would have been gunned down at a gala awards ceremony by a wild-eyed lunatic if not for the quick thinking of her dashing bodyguard ... oh, wait.

When "Country Grammar" became a crossover smash in the summer of 2000, Nelly needed a little muscle to help navigate the increasingly huge crowds. And, just as he did with his personal manager, road manager, personal assistant, barber and just about every other member of his traveling posse, Nelly looked no further than his own backyard. B knew Nelly from playing softball, and Nelly once greeted him with the salutation, "Dang, you a big motherfucker." B worked a bit for his cousin Bob, who pro- ➔

OOPS!

MOST BODYGUARDS EXPERTLY PROTECT THEIR CLIENTS FROM THE DEVIUS INTENTS OF NE'ER-DO-WELLS. THESE BODYGUARDS? NOT SO MUCH ...

TREVOR REES-JONES

PRINCIPAL CLIENT **PRINCESS DIANA**

BOTCHED GIG Though it hardly seems fair to pick on the bodyguard who barely survived the crash that killed Diana and her boyfriend, Dodi Al Fayed, a seasoned pro would never trap a client in a speeding car driven by an impaired chauffeur just to avoid a shutterbug.

ROSEY GRIER

PRINCIPAL CLIENT **ROBERT F. KENNEDY**

BOTCHED GIG Though former L.A. Rams lineman (and future *Love Boat* guest star) Grier was never personally blamed for the shooting of RFK in June 1968, many believe allowing the candidate to exit the Ambassador Hotel's packed ballroom through a pantry was a fatal tactical error.

MCKINLEY LEE

PRINCIPAL CLIENT **SNOOP DOGG**

BOTCHED GIG Following a 1993 argument between Snoop and reputed gang member Philip Woldemariam—apparently over a gang sign that was flashed—Lee shot Woldemariam, allegedly in the back ... out of "self-defense." Lee was charged with murder, Snoop with being an accessory, both were acquitted and many, many copies of *Doggystyle* were sold.

FRANK ALEXANDER

PRINCIPAL CLIENT **TUPAC SHAKUR**

BOTCHED GIG Though it's unlikely anyone could have prevented the much-shot-at Tupac's still-unsolved murder in Las Vegas in September 1996, it was Alexander, his full-time security guard, who initially played the role of scapegoat. Unarmed and in a separate car, Alexander was powerless to protect the rapper from his drive-by shooter. *STEVE KANDELL*



Snoop and his bodyguard play a little "Glock, paper, scissors."



Big B gets hauled away to the pokey.



An apprentice's work is never done.

tected rappers such as Too Short and Da Brat, while fine-tuning his don't-fuck-with-me skills bouncing at local clubs. Nelly offered B the gig, and B headed to the nearest Big & Tall shop to stock up on extra-large Polo.

"B used to terrorize the neighborhood," Nelly remembers, and the reign of terror turned out to be perfect training for life as a bodyguard. "He does a good job, bully-wise. He hasn't failed me. But the job ain't over."

When *Blender* first meets Big B in his hotel room in Phoenix, he's sprawled out on the bed, scraping his cuticles with a pocket-knife. Even a friendly handshake is mildly humiliating, as our girlish wrist is immediately dwarfed by B's catcher's mitt of a right hand. The night's scheduled concert has just been canceled for reasons unknown, so everyone is at ease, awaiting further instructions. There are rumors of bowling,

makers. "It's like they're glowing real bright," says Big B. "You can see it in their eyes, in their body movements."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HENCE, lesson two: Be psychic.

During shows, B lurks along the perimeter of the stage for anyone who might possibly throw objects, or themselves, onstage. Or worse. Keith "Triple O.G." Duncan often works the stage at Nelly's concerts as well. A 20-plus-year veteran of the bodyguard trade—and a former gangbanger, he's quick to point out—Duncan protected Eddie Murphy during his mid-'80s, leather-pants heyday as well as countless artists since. Over the years, he has also developed an instinct for picking out the talkers from the stalkers, a subtle skill that the yellow-jacketed goons hired by the venues to police the crowd rarely bother to exercise. "It's the quiet ones you

"THOSE GUYS GET ON YOUR NERVES," B SAYS OF THE

as well as rumors of packing up and driving to L.A. right away. As Nelly's managers and pals mill about, hotel bar margaritas are sipped, blunts are rolled, television shows are watched. The apprenticeship begins.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LESSON ONE: YOU don't need to weigh 450 pounds. But it can't hurt.

"I've seen plenty of bodyguards your size," B tells *Blender*. "They're usually cops, but if you wear a suit and look serious, you can still command respect." Sure enough, 69-year-old British semi-legend Alf Weaver, who is commonly considered the first true rock-star bodyguard, is only five-foot-eight and managed to protect high-profile celebs like the Rolling Stones and Bob Marley without incident. We are oddly encouraged.

Not that it's bad, however, to be gargantuan—bald and bearded, B is commonly mistaken for both Ruben Studdard and former bodyguard Suge Knight, but actually looks more like the two of them welded together. Wherever Nelly goes—concerts, shopping sprees and, yes, dates—B goes with him, first out of the car, locking eyes with everyone nearby to scope out trouble-

really gotta watch," Duncan explains. "Never the ones who are loud or in your face."

Once a potential problem is singled out, Big B doesn't wait for the other guy to make a move. "If I think someone's trouble, I'll get real close and try and kick something up."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LESSON THREE: YOU may well get shot.

An essential quality for any bodyguard is the willingness to put oneself in mortal danger for the sake of the client. When a melee broke out during a Detroit after-party a few years ago, B stashed Nelly and Ja Rule in a converted meat locker and guarded the door until the trouble blew over. Both Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. were gunned down while their bodyguards were in tow. Obviously, these rappers had a more violent edge than the relatively cuddly Nelly, but it's not as if B, a licensed gun owner, hasn't considered the implications.

"I'd take a bullet," B says nonchalantly. "I've taken one before, in both legs, working the front door of a club in St. Louis. And the shots weren't even meant for me."

Blender's newfound encouragement: waning rapidly.



B admires Nelly admiring Sandler.



"Excuse me, who are ... ma'am, you can't go in there ... hello?"



Outside the Four Seasons: "No, you can't ride shotgun."

THE PERKS OF being a pop-star bodyguard may include, but are not limited to, posh hotels, free meals, fair wages, groupie spillover and A-list hobnobbing. B admits he wouldn't mind parlaying this rarefied access into a little glory of his own, much as one-time bodyguard Mr. T did. But there are some drawbacks as well—it is B's job to be connected to Nelly's hip, wherever and whenever that hip goes, and that doesn't bode well for someone who wants to have a life of his own. B's divorce is about to be finalized and he has two children back in St. Louis he hardly ever gets to see. "Don't get me wrong, I love the life," B says. "But you never know when you're gonna be home."

And then there's the downtime, the long hours waiting for word that Nelly—"Mo" to his inner circle—is on the move. During the press junket for *The Longest Yard* at the Four Seasons, the biggest threats to Nelly's

who inspires that level of relentless attention, and, fortunately for Big B, Nelly is not that type. ("We don't get a lot of ruckus," says Nelly himself.) B has never come close to the nightmare that guarding a superstarlet like Lohan or Britney Spears must be, although a photographer in Connecticut is suing B over an alleged backstage brawl in April—B has no comment on the specifics. "Those guys get on your nerves," B says of the paparazzi. "Dickheads."

John "Q" Elgani, on the other hand, has seen every trick in the book—photographers sneaking into hotel rooms dressed as bell-boys, to name one—and staunchly believes the secret to guarding lies in patience and reason, not intimidation. "I'd say 85 percent of the job is mental, and only 15 percent physical." Where B's act-first techniques may work for his client, Q thinks this is simply an invitation to litigation from opportunistic photographers, and was trained by his mentor, Randy Jones (now head of security for pop übermanager Johnny Wright), to be a bit more discreet in his star-wrangling. "A huge guy covered in jewelry might attract more attention than the stars themselves," Q explains. "The best security is security you don't even know is there."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BACKSTAGE AT THE Universal Amphitheater is a mob scene. Nelly and the St. Lunatics have just finished headlining a bill with Fat Joe, T.I., Keyshia Cole and a crew of new signees to Nelly's Derty Entertainment label; between the artists, dancers, handlers and hangers-on, there are more people roaming the corridors than there are in some rap shows' entire audiences.

B is parked on a metal folding chair outside Nelly's dressing room, but he does not appear particularly discriminating about who can enter its smoke-filled confines. Or so it would seem to the untrained (read: *Blender's*) eye—but the second an unfamiliar face tries to slide by, a meaty hand reaches out to block the door. There aren't many unfamiliar faces at this point on the tour, so B feels comfortable enough in the security situation to walk away from the dressing room for a moment.

Ever dutiful, *Blender* assumes B's chair

in his absence, ready to apply the lessons we've learned over the past two days spent watching him do ... well, not a whole lot, really. Coincidentally, we are wearing a black shirt nearly identical to B's, so maybe no one will even know the difference! *Blender* sits and glowers at every person who dares to enter the dressing room, scanning faces diligently for hints of menace or duplicity, careful to make eye contact. We stop no one.

While the soft-spoken, wizened Triple O.G. is just beginning to educate *Blender* about proper protection technique and how growing up around violence helped teach him to prevent it, pushing and yelling can be heard from the hallway around the corner. Apparently, the venue security took umbrage with B's decision to let a few people backstage after the show, words were exchanged and someone slapped someone. Even though numerous witnesses insist repeatedly that B did nothing to instigate a confrontation, he is arrested.

In the parking lot, representatives from Nelly's camp angrily plead B's case while a pair of cops peer through the windows of Nelly's car with flashlights—and they're not admiring the leather interior. Realizing that in this tension-filled, cop-laden environment, *Blender's* amateur bodyguard skills are both unnecessary and, probably, unwanted, we hop in a pickup truck and proceed to bail out our mentor from the holding station, where he bides his time among drunk teenagers, shoplifters and people who have lost their car keys.

B is stone-faced as he ambles out. Perhaps he is surprised and grateful to see his loyal charge leading the rescue party. But mostly he's just pissed about his summons for battery—certain to be overturned, he's assured—and only wants to flee for safer confines in a five-star Beverly Hills Hotel.

It's been a long night. There's not much more we can learn here, and there certainly isn't much more he feels like teaching us, so we awkwardly share a man-hug and go our separate ways. Nelly has an early call time for a video shoot downtown tomorrow morning, which, for B, means a long day of sitting by a trailer. In all likelihood, nothing eventful will happen. Unless, of course, something does. [BLENDER]

PAPARAZZI. "DICKHEADS."

well-being over the course of a day of interviews are interminable questions from German journalists about facial band-aids, and Byron Allen's insistence on kickin' it. That leaves B and the rest of Nelly's entourage to marinate in the lobby, holding court as passing dignitaries and boldface names pay respects with soul hugs. Fellow *Longest Yard* co-star Burt Reynolds excitedly brings his son over for an introduction. B never appears starstruck or fazed in the slightest by this attention and affection—his pet peeve is seeing other bodyguards pose for photos with celebrities. "That's just wrong," he says.

Not 30 feet from B's seat in the Four Seasons lounge, actress/singer/tabloid fodder Lindsay Lohan makes a beeline for the elevator bank, visibly shaken, on the verge of tears and, yes, if we may say so, way too thin. She nervously explains to a hotel escort that a paparazzo has just run her car off the road, blowing out her tire in the process. (Another photographer will actually hit her car a few weeks later.) As a young, famous, hot person, this sort of peril is part of her everyday life. And, by proxy, part of her bodyguard's life.

There's a very specific type of celebrity

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110

DMX

Hip-hop's FBI agent-imper-
sonating roughneck returns
with his sixth album—and
he's still not smiling.

★★★



120

IGGY POP

He helped invent punk and
put Detroit Rock City on the
map, all without a shirt. A
new anthology looks back.

★★★★



128

THE HOLD STEADY

Loud, grouchy and funny
as hell, NYC's best new
band take their screwball
show on the road.

★★★★

THE GUIDE

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM

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BACKSTREET BOYS

Back from a five-year break, with less hair, new suits

R. Kelly tries to
seduce a young,
sexy microphone
stand.

UNZIPPED

FROM CULINARY BOOTY-CALLS TO A FIVE-PART MINISERIES, KELLS LETS HIS LIBIDO LOOSE

R. KELLY TP.3 RELOADED

★★★★

JIVE

R. KELLY WILL not wear a do-rag with the words MAKE TRADE FAIR scrawled across it anytime soon, but that doesn't mean he's oblivious to globalization. "You're a Jamaican queen, I'm an American king," he purrs four songs into his new album, propositioning a Caribbean woman. "Let's get together and make sweet love, let's get together and mix cultures." An addiction, a weakness, a curative, a hobby, a border-blurring, utopian force: For R. Kelly, sex is *everything*. For better or, as Illinois and Florida law enforcers might tell you, for worse, he seems to find it everywhere he looks. Why else would a man charged with 14 counts of child pornography devote all 19 songs on his eighth album to tales from the bedroom?

Correction: The best song doesn't make it to the bedroom. It's called "Sex in the Kitchen," and it proves that if you're invited to R. Kelly's for dinner, you should order take-out. "Sex in the kitchen, over by the stove/Put you on the counter by the buttered rolls," he sings, committing at least six health-code violations in two bars. Slow-burning and entendre-laced, it's Kelly at his finest; despite the overwhelming ridiculousness of his come-ons, he sings them in earnest, pleading and anguished tones. Even when his ass is bumping against a Cuisinart, Kelly can treat sex with the utmost seriousness.

If we laugh despite his unwavering straight face and feel a bit uneasy at the same time, that's because Kelly's obsessions have taken on a whiff of the tragicomic. "I want sex while we're sleeping," he pines; "Let me put this adapter in you, it will keep you charged"; "Girl, I'm ready to toss your salad!" To hear Kelly moan and groan these lines is to hear a man enslaved, his body—and his metaphors,

apparently—buckling under the pressure of an outsized, insatiable desire. It's one of the things separating him from Usher, his only competition for the contemporary R&B throne and a distant second at that: From Kelly's gloriously oddball double-entendres to his eccentric musical choices (the ambiguously Eastern-sounding giberish on 2003's "Thoia Thoing," the sound of dripping water that runs inexplicably throughout *TP.3*), Kelly sounds exhilaratingly unhinged by passion. It drives him into territory no one else is able—or willing—to navigate.

Kelly's last album spent two discs keeping this passion in check. The first disc, *Happy People*, paid tribute to elder-pleasing "stepping" music—a respectable, soul-inflected dance genre that sounds better suited to picnics than porking. The second, *U Saved Me*, was all repentant gospel, and its title track, an epic big-up to wayward lives righted by Jesus, was the only memorable song on either disc. If the album

when he started releasing the brightest, most upbeat singles of his career. On his 1993 breakthrough album, *12 Play*, he'd made a name with first-class coitus jams, his lush singing voice tugging against the beat as if it was an elastic waistband—by 2003's *Chocolate Factory*, he'd moved his focus to percussion-drunk club music, delivering lines in a hooky, syncopated sing-rap and melding R&B to hip-hop more excitingly than anyone had before.

Kelly hits the dance floor here ("Playa's Only," "Girls Go Crazy") but his dominant mode is the low-tempo boot-knocker, go-all-night promises set to beats so single-mindedly geared towards baby-making the album should come packaged with a midwife. By the thirteenth one, "(Sex) Love Is What We Makin'," it feels a bit samey, but slow jams occasion the finest songwriting innovation here. "Trapped in the Closet" is a five-part saga that starts with Kelly awakening in a strange woman's bed and

USHER IS HIS ONLY COMPETITION FOR THE R&B THRONE.

wasn't intended as an apologetic retreat into tact, it was sexless—and boring—enough to pass for one.

On *TP.3*, the floodgates are back open; Kelly's "I'm sorry" has switched to "Fuck you," with the emphasis on *fuck*. The album is a middle finger, to name just one erect appendage he seems to have on the brain. He even steeps the slinky, falsetto-heavy "Remote Control" in VCR and camcorder imagery, thumbing his nose at all the trouble videotape has caused him.

Or maybe he just wants to erase it. The title of *TP.3* refers to 2000's *TP-2.com*, the last album Kelly released before being arrested in June 2002. It's tempting to hear *TP.3* as Kelly's attempt to pretend the sex scandal never happened—in fact, that's been his general m.o. since his arrest,

doesn't stop until we've met her pastor husband Rufus, his gay lover Chuck and a highway patrolman whose secret *Blender* won't spoil. It complicates Kelly's sex craze, spiking desire with secrecy, fear and guilt—and it suggests, not coincidentally, that the law is just as depraved as those it polices. That's the subtext, but "Trapped in the Closet" is, first and foremost, a brilliant triumph of form (think 24) over content (think *General Hospital*). The cliffhanger structure brings intrigue to a frankly messy, anticlimactic plot. Sure, it could have ended after three chapters. But R. has never stood for restraint.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Trapped in the Closet Ch. I," "Sex in the Kitchen," "Playa's Only"

THE SCORE

★★★★★

A CLASSIC

★★★★

GREAT

★★★

GOOD

★★

MEDIocre

★

FOUL

ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS

MOVE ALONG ★★

INTERSCOPE

Popular misfits deliver more faux-angry dispatches from happy drunken tour-bus sex parties

The most likely-to-succeed rejects you'll ever meet, these driven dreamboats' sophomore album pushes past emo into pure pop with

songs like the wistful, propulsive "Stab My Back," about teenage trust betrayed, and the thin but effective emoticon anthem "Move Along." The best hook is unfortunately attached to the lyrics "I'll keep you my dirty little secret," which kinda lacks the backhanded charm of forefathers the Replacements' "Don't you wanna be my little problem?" Later on though, on "Dance Inside," when the Oklahoma foursome nearly abandon screamo yelling, their instinctive sweetness brings to mind the guiltiest little radio pleasures of the past 25 years. Hopefully these lucky guys will eventually chuck the high school angst and graduate to soft-rock about the summer breeze and rock-star satisfaction.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD: "Dirty Little Secret," "Move Along," "Dance Inside"

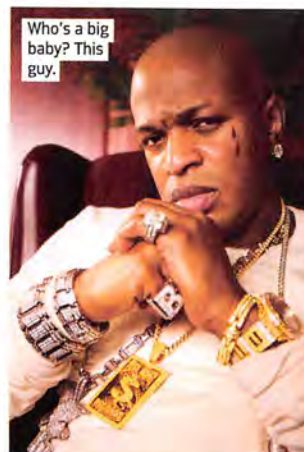
BABY

FAST MONEY ★★★

CASH MONEY/UNIVERSAL

Southern mogul and Big Tymers member reinforces his brand identity

Baby—a.k.a. Birdman, head of Dirty South originators Cash Money



Records—is not so much a personality as a marketing juggernaut. Other MCs boast of technical skills and/or executive aspirations; while Baby mostly lacks the former, he's absolutely surpassed the latter. The cheerily routine follow-up to his platinum-selling solo debut coincides with videogame voice work and Birdman-branded clothing ventures. It also sounds as familiar as a jingle. Over the busy bounce of

P-Funky Mannie Fresh beats, Baby is his own affable, laconic pitchman. The selling points: I'm rich (the creeping, restless "Hug Da Block," many others), stay cool under stress (the weirdly sultry "Pressure's On") and have love for the club (the molasses chant "Shyne On," based on a '97 B.G. hit). As product placement goes, it sure beats hawking Courvoisier.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Big Pimpin'," "Hug Da Block"

ERIC BENÉT

HURRICANE ★★

WARNER BROS.

Man on a mission: Eric Benét sings every note as if it's his last

Poor Eric Benét. He makes music, but people want answers: How do you fuck up a marriage to Halle Berry? So on his third album, Benét tries hard to establish himself as a sincere singer, as opposed to a philandering ex-husband. Really hard: This set is emotive and schmaltzy enough to make Celine Dion seem hard-boiled. Laying it on thick, vocally and lyrically, Benét

BOYS II MEN

Backstreet's back! And trading pop for inspirational balladry

BACKSTREET BOYS

NEVER GONE ★★

JIVE

BACKSTREET BOYS caught U.S. ears with a jarring suggestion of comeback drama, shouting "Backstreet's back!" even though we didn't know who they were, never mind why they'd gone away. Their gorgeous Disney-fication of R&B charmed desperate housewives and teen daughters, but by their 2000 album *Black and Blue*, the decreasingly boyish crooners looked like leering substitute teachers. Now, after a hiatus and some life changes—Brian Littrell started procreating, A.J. McLean finished rehab, Nick Carter made the tabloids as one of Paris Hilton's hamburgers—the Boys take a new tack, avoiding E! farce to gun for Lifetime TV inspiration.

Never Gone's rock ballads are painfully and sometimes powerfully earnest demands for meaning and redemption, transforming the guys from good boyfriends to resolute husbands and solid citizens. While "Poster Girl" hints at

the teen dreams of yore, the dominant mood is rain-soaked pianos and heart-tugging guitars.

Several songs politely ask permission to return to fans' hearts. "Just Want You to Know" revisits the hooky splendor of Kelly Clarkson's recent smash "Since U Been Gone," answering her declaration of independence with a plea for reconciliation. The first single, "Incomplete"—which features the scientifically intriguing line "Empty spaces fill me up"—riffs on *Jerry Maguire's* iconic chick-flick declaration of love, celebrating earthly romance while also hinting at a Higher Love.

The soaring falsettos of "Weird World" grasp for universality with a "message to a G.I. in the desert," musing, "Back here, it's her and me/Having our first baby/While he's out there—takin' 'em on." The Boys understand their audience's greatest concern: homeland security in all its forms. They do what they can to keep home fires burning, though a bonfire now seems beyond them.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD: "Incomplete," "Poster Girl"





All-American Rejects: Sure as hell not rejected by the folks at Urban Outfitters.

transforms his soulful melodies into R&B power ballads. Crooning about "lonely teardrops" and "the hand of God" and hurricanes that "wash away the pain," he seems guided by one motto: When in doubt, go falsetto. At his funkiest, he delivers gems ("Where Does the Love Go"), but mostly Benét needs to tone down the dramatics. Unless they win Halle back.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Where Does the Love Go," "Be Myself Again"

FRANK BLACK

HONEYCOMB ★★

BACK PORCH/EMI

Roundball leader of the Pixies unveils a new influence: yoga

There are two sides to Frank Black—the screeching, daredevil Pixie and the traditional songwriter who appreciates triangle players and twelve-string guitars. His tenth solo album indicates that, even as he revels in reliving the former, he doesn't intend to abandon the latter. Recorded in Nashville with veteran southern soul musicians in four days preceding the Pixies' first reunion tour, *Honeycomb* is folk-tinged Americana patently indebted to Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. Written post-divorce, the songs feature his rawest lyrics (with the exception of an ode to his girlfriend Violet in which he actually sings, "Violet's the chakra for me") and, in the gripping "Another Velvet Nightmare," one of his most accomplished melodies. Compared with the Pixies, this is conservative and gentlemanly—but remember, Black's real name is Charles Michael Kittredge Thompson IV.

APRIL LONG

DOWNLOAD: "Another Velvet Nightmare," "Honeycomb"

BOW WOW

WANTED ★

SONY URBAN

Leaving pimples for pimping, megaplatinum teeny-hopper gives maturity a bad name

A kinetically gifted protégé of Hotlanta hip-hoppreneur Jermaine Dupri, Lil Bow Wow has elected to celebrate his coming-of-age by shortening his name—perhaps to save time while spelling it out, a

skill he demonstrates repeatedly. It's not a very impressive trick; that goes double for the 11 songs of Thug Lite (witness "Fresh AZIMIZ") and half-hearted seductions (à la "Like You") on his third disc. Aside from a cadence that sounds like sampled thunder (on the track called, yup, "B.O.W.") and the snap-crackly pop of "Go," *Wanted* makes one year for lost youth. With once-hyperactive beats stalled into the slow roll currently mandated for grown-ass men, the main achievement is to remind us how boring adulthood is when you follow its rules.

RENE VIENET

DOWNLOAD: None

BOYZ N DA HOOD

BOYZ N DA HOOD ★★★★★

BAD BOY

Atlanta foursome selected by P. Diddy to restore the violence to hip-hop. Amen!

Boyz N Da Hood hope to reclaim Atlanta from the tyranny of crunk and make it safe for the thugs again. They even have a song about it, "Lay It Down," with an incessant hook that doubles as a statement of purpose: "Get your hands up, but I ain't here to party." Their debut is gritty and captivating, full of heavily drawled threats over beats that suggest automatic weaponry ("Felonies," "If You a Thug"). And two Boyz are genuine stars: Jody Breeze, who masks menace with aww-shucks charm, and Young Jeezy, who does the same with emphatic punch lines. They duet on the excellent "Trap Nig**z," a conversation between hustlers that proves business negotiations can be as smooth as any seduction.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "If You a Thug," "Dem Boyz," "Trap Nig**z"

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND

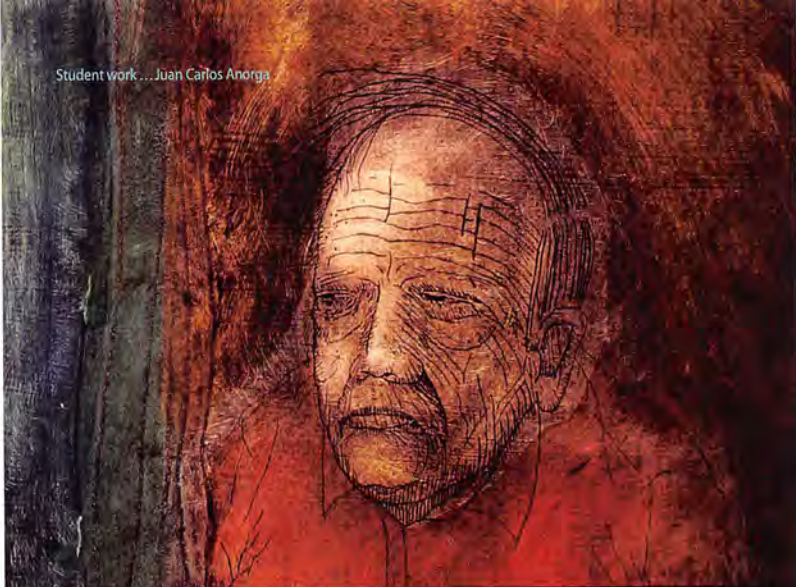
TWENTY ★★

SANCTUARY

Not their twentieth album, only their fourteenth, and fresh as ever for those who'll listen up

Established blues-circuit stars who've been an unchanged unit since 1990, the Robert Cray Band →

Student work... Juan Carlos Anorga



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have suffered the fate of so many committed formalists before them: repeating themselves. But even if nobody cares beyond the equally committed fan base their skills have earned them, they refuse to betray their compulsion to put an extra twist on their smooth, smoky evocations of love's pain. The killer on this subtle collection is the romantically bereft stop-smoking song "My Last Regret," pronounced by Cray and written by keyboardist/co-producer Jim Pugh to double as "my last cigarette." The title tune's title honors the age its protagonist dies at—in Iraq. And though "I'm Walkin'" is about what you'd figure, you won't hear many veterans "strollin' out the door" with such a kick.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "My Last Regret," "I'm Walkin'"

THE DEAD 60s

THE DEAD 60s ★★

EPIC

English upstarts who think their nostalgia is better than yours

This Liverpool quartet embeds its manifesto in its name: Death to the decade that, thanks to the Beatles, inspires more tired local nostalgia

than any other. But long live the '70s! Or at least 1979, the year the Clash and the Specials revived punk rock's waning pulse with a righteous blast of reggae. The Dead 60s reproduce ska-punk's chugging basslines and wheezing organs on this ferociously tight, brash debut. But while their forebears railed against the injustices of Margaret Thatcher's right-wing Britain, they're rebels without a cause. Their lyrics stitch together sneering slogans, and they throw in wailing sirens to create an impression of outlaw urgency, but as the U.K. single "Riot Radio" illustrates, the only thing they're fighting for—and quite likely to get—is heavy rotation.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "You're Not the Law," "Riot Radio"

DREDG

CATCH WITHOUT ARMS ★★

INTERSCOPE

Sensual grooves and sturdy riffs from art-metal foursome

Like Incubus, these Bay Area hard-rockers polish nü-metal's anguished yowl and unfinished edges with arcing melodies and sensitive-guy lyrics. Unlike Brandon Boyd's boys,



who offset power-ballad hits with more overt aggro moves, this quartet function free of the desire to prove they're not wimps. Singer Gavin Hayes's indignation is cooled by a Jack Johnson-worthy Zen-surf mellow, and his band embroider their strident rhythms with pretty piano plinks, wistful slide guitar and even the occasional disco beat. In "Zebraskin," Hayes—his other instrumental duty: "toys"—draws back a curtain of guitars to croon sensually about losing his best friend. In a small way, he's finding out how far he can push heavy music toward something lighter.

MIKAEL WOOD

DOWNLOAD: "Zebraskin," "Catch Without Arms," "Tanbark"

BRIAN ENO

ANOTHER DAY ON EARTH

★★★

RYKODISC/HANNIBAL

U2 producer and all-around genius has taken a lesson from Bono

Brian Eno found it so easy to write brilliant rock songs—songs that crackled with perversity, turned purple with laughter and curiosity, songs that predicted the next 10 years of music—that he pretty much retired from it in 1978. By next inventing ambient music and acting as producer and sherpa for Talking Heads and U2, he won a reputation as the smartest man in rock, which he is. Making a return to songwrit-

DREDG: ANDY COTTERILL

ing, he reclaims the idea of quiet from New Agers and yoga instructors; in a softly rousing way, Professor Eno urges us to consider our global neighbors. "How many people will we feed today?" he asks worriedly. The spirit turns determined in the great "Just Another Day," which generates a nearly religious emotional updraft, but a record that encourages global consciousness shouldn't sound so isolated and chilly, so utterly British.

ROB TANNENBAUM
 DOWNLOAD: "Just Another Day," "Passing Over"

FATTY KOO

HOUSE OF FATTY KOO ★★

SONY URBAN/DAS/COLUMBIA

Reality-show sextet makes cutie pop

Despite an awful name, this multi-ethnic collective from Columbus, Ohio, has a bright future. As the subject of a reality series on BET, Fatty Koo's six young singer-musicians have a leg up on most groups in visibility. More important, the group displays a gift for fusing pop, R&B and hip-hop in the progressive tradition of the Fugees and Black Eyed Peas. While not as passionate as the Fugees, their vocal arrange-

ments, memorable choruses and gee-whiz attitude is way more palatable than the Peas' calculation. The sweet sounding "Like That Girl," Stevie Wonder-ish "Chills" and party track "Juke Joint" reflect a group already adept at the sweet side of R&B and, in an era when quality songwriting is rare, Fatty Koo show the potential to be consistent hitmakers.

NELSON GEORGE

DOWNLOAD: "Drive Myself Crazy," "Chills"

THE KNITTERS

THE MODERN SOUNDS OF THE KNITTERS ★★

ZOË/ROUNDER

Pioneering L.A. punks reconvene for a good old-fashioned hootenanny

When John Doe, Exene Cervenka and DJ Bonebrake of X and Dave Alvin of the Blasters cut their Knitters one-off in 1985, it was a retreat—a cutesy time-out rather than an alt-country breakthrough. But now it's their X and Blasters reunions that ring false, while this record—supposedly country but really folk—seems perfectly suited to the careers of middle-aged bohemians who are getting by. Even its pleasantness feels achieved, and

many tracks have a wicked edge. The one about the couple who aren't having sex anymore is all too apt. The one about the meat-packing industry is bitter, funny and devil-may-care. And the closer is Stephen Wolf's "Born to Be Wild." "Never gonna die," they claim, and they mean it.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "The New Call of the Wreckin' Ball," "Skin Deep Town"

JAMIE LIDELL

MULTIPLY ★★

WARP

Advanced technology allows geeky Brit to become Stevie Wonder

Singer/producer Jamie Lidell sounds, at first, like a British soul fetishist—someone who fixated on Al Green and Stevie Wonder records as exotic Americana, and learned to imitate his favorite singers and reproduce the vibe of '60s Southern soul ("Multiply") and '80s Prince ("When I Come Back Around"). As his second solo album evolves from slinky funk to prickly slow jams, though, he comes off more like a superfreaky original, blessed with an effortlessly flexible voice that he overdubs into dry-ice clouds of

harmonies, and armed with a laptop that welds the microtextures of egg-head electronica onto his grooves. The idea is to build a monorail between Aphex Twin and Stax Records; the songwriting eventually slacks off, but Lidell's performances don't.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Multiply"

MARJORIE FAIR

SELF HELP SERENADE ★★

CAPITOL

California band named for a rose are sad, in a grandly beautiful way

By now, art-pop is just another kingdom in the united nations of rock, →

I LOVE THIS CD:



ELIJAH WOOD
 ACTOR, THE LORD OF THE RINGS, EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED

GOGOL BORDELLO EAST INFECTION

(RUBRIC)

"It's refreshing to hear a mix of gypsy folk music with a punk-rock aesthetic. This is the best thing they've ever done."

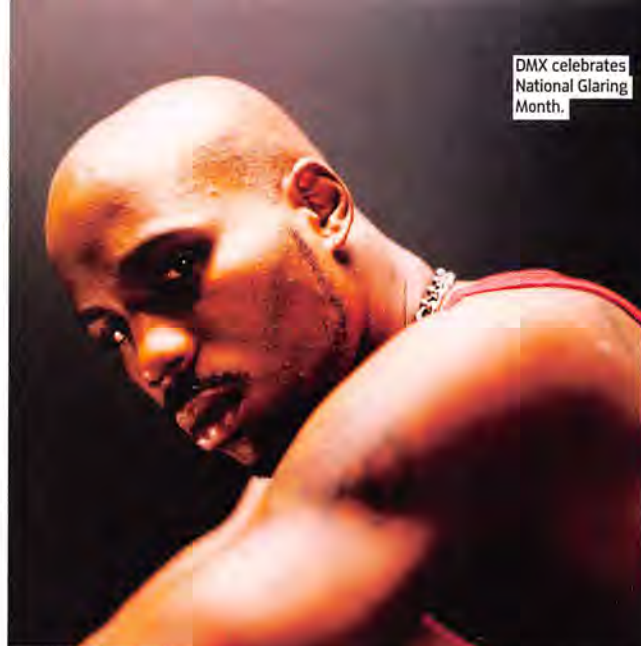
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DMX celebrates
National Glaring
Month.



X FILES

Part-time rapper, part-time FBI impersonator, full-time hood

DMX

HERE WE GO AGAIN ★★★

RUFF RYDERS/DEF JAM

FOR A GUY WHO can't seem to control his criminal tendencies—he was most recently arrested in 2004 for an attempted carjacking while posing as an FBI agent—Earl Simmons seems uncannily attuned to the limits of gangsta rap.

The MC/actor, whose five previous albums all debuted at No. 1, expertly smuggles pop in his hardcore. His hit '99

curdles: Witness the unaccompanied closer "The Prayer VI," a turgid entreaty devoid of grace, and "Stop Hatin' Skit," which seems funny and self-deprecating until the skit's DMX hater simply gets shot.

The rest of the time, X loses himself in the production's sweep. The first three songs, lean and lunging, showcase his best traits: speedy rhymes that leap with the beats, chorus barks that transcend melody and an underlying buoyancy.

DMX's terse, rolling bray of a voice still can't take him

where his feelings won't, so the guests here are welcome: Jadakiss brings breezy confi-

dence to the sly funk of "It's Personal." But what X really lacks is imagination. He brings down the otherwise alluring disco bump of "Baby Motha" by insisting "she's a stupid bitch," without so much as a hint of why he hooked up with her in the first place. Knowing rap's limits doesn't mean he can recognize his own.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "It's Personal," "Shit That I Do"

DMX'S CURRENT LISTENING

SCARFACE
THE FIX DEF JAM SOUTH

NAS
GOD'S SON COLUMBIA

X CRANKS ANGER AND ANGUISH TO 11.

single "Party Up (Up in Here)" was bubblegum clenched in the teeth of a square-jawed thug, and his growl and icier-than-bling glare betray an intense focus on crossing over.

Ever since Tupac, hardcore has blended anger and anguish, often muddling the two. DMX cranks both emotions to 11. But instead of blending, he switches between them with a bipolar intensity. The music—produced by his longtime collaborator Swizz Beats, Scott Storch and others—is this album's dynamic element, running the gamut from explosive to sweet and soulful. Without a top track, X's spilled milk quickly

THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

where the Beach Boys are father to Granddaddy, and Mercury Rev trips out in half-time; your passport is a falsetto and a smiley smile. Enter Marjorie Fair, who sound like relatively happy citizens; even when auteur Evan Slamka ponders dying young in "Empty Room," he asks us to "fill my empty room with the sun." The lightness of darkness is Artpop-topia's main import; it comes from California and, without spectacular melodies, it can wear you out. Marjorie Fair's plinky strums, orchestral swells and hummable lyrics are hard to dislike and impossible to love, golden-throated but, alas, no flaming lips. Nothing if not sunny, but nothing new under the sun.

RENE VIENET

DOWNLOAD: "Halfway House"

MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK

COMMIT THIS TO MEMORY ★★

EPITAPH

Blink-182 bassist helps teen-angst punks blow their wad too early

"Attractive Today," the leadoff song on Minneapolis emo band Motion City Soundtrack's second album, is everything mall-punk should be. A minute-and-a-half-long blast of sugar-rush guitars, low-end chug and crunchy synth buzz, it refreshes like a gulp of cherry Kool-Aid, and then gets the hell out of the way. The rest of the disc, which was produced by blink-182's Mark Hoppus, should be quarantined inside the food court. Singer Justin Pierre's Live-Journal poetry ("I'm so full of love, it deeply sickens me," "The BMX bike of my life is about to explode") is only made more groan-worthy by MCS's reliance on alt-rock staples like Nirvana-esque soft/loud dynamics and Weezer-quoting Moog riffs. MCS may smell like teen spirit, but they'll be left behind in mom's attic when it's time to go to college.

AMY PHILLIPS

DOWNLOAD: "Attractive Today"

BOB MOULD

BODY OF SONG ★★★★★

YEP ROC

Reversing his long decline, a punk primalist gets his grump groove on again

Bob Mould has embodied rock's dueling impulses—ugly vs. romantic, closeted vs. out, primal vs. tuneful—as fully as anyone in the 25 years since he launched Hüsker Dü and made hardcore punk sing. Lately, his hermetic electronica experiments

have followed up on his involvement in the extroverted drag musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. No new fans need apply here, but those who know and love his sound will find that this self-styled career summation (note title), a nod back to late Hüsker Dü with computerized updates, sprouts horns with repeat listens. Though celebrated for his guitar work, it's the plain and plaintive timbre of his voice that remains most distinctive—gnarled, questioning, hoarse with recrimination. It isn't what he says, it's how he labors it, then releases. Pushing harder than expected, it's the beauty of his unloveliness.

ERIC WEISBARD

DOWNLOAD: "Best Thing," "Missing You," "Circles"

NOMO

NOMO ★★★

YPSILANTI

Afrobeat from the Great Lakes

With the recent hipster interest in Afrobeat, the jazz-funk style created in '70s Nigeria by Fela Kuti, the only thing dissuading young Americans from trying their hand at playing the music has been logistical difficulties—a convincing Afrobeat band has to be too big to rehearse in a basement. Elliot Bergman, saxophonist-bandleader of Detroit's

Nomo, has somehow managed to assemble a 17-piece group; luckily, one of them is guitarist-producer Warn DeFever of the experimental-

minded indie pop project His Name Is Alive,

who has recorded their debut album with a note-perfect retro vibe. When the ensemble locks into Bergman's sly instrumental themes (and a cover of Nigerian singer Segun Bucknor's "La, La, La"), they sound disarmingly like forgotten favorites from 1974 Lagos. Only a couple of tracks with ill-considered pseudo-soulful vocals and cheesy solos break the spell.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Discontinued," "Better Than That"

GRAHAM PARKER

SONGS OF NO CONSEQUENCE ★★★

BLOODSHOT

Bitter British rocker stages a minor comeback

Graham Parker released "Mercury Poisoning" in 1978 as a kiss-off to a record label he blamed for not making him a star within two years of his emergence, and while the song is still a coup, the venom infected no one but him; he quickly



Rupee seems lonelee.

turned into a grumpy uncle, spouting conspiracy theories until his albums were consumed whole by bitterness and a persecution complex. But times have caught up with Parker, and his indignation against shallow newspapers and plastic celebrities now feels like a quality blog brought to life by a simple, solid rock band. With his briskest set of riffs in years, he earns the right to scorn "'90s cartoon punk" in his tree-bark bray. And when, paraphrasing Chuck Berry, he sings, "I could play the guitar just like wringing a neck," he's just telling the truth.

ROB TANNENBAUM

DOWNLOAD: "Suck 'n' Blow," "Chloroform"

MICHAEL PENN

MR. HOLLYWOOD JR. 1947

★★★★

MIMEOGRAPH

Mr. Aimee Mann composes a surprisingly hummable song cycle about post-WWII America



Michael Penn's songs are like vintage cufflinks: debonair without being at all in fashion, and made so

well they'll never fall apart. Penn's first disc in 5 years (neatniks take their time getting dressed) perfectly suits both his interest in the past and his obsessive tendencies. Unlike his wife, Aimee Mann, whose new CD is a full-on song cycle, Penn chose a year instead of a storyline to anchor this concept album, and it allows him to explore some heavy themes—technology's impact from gadgets to the Bomb, changing notions of manliness—that resonate now as strongly as they did 50 years ago.



SIR MICHAEL CAINE
ACTOR, BATMAN BEGINS

DAMIEN RICE

0 (VECTOR)

"He has one song where he sings, 'Say hello to my Eskimo friends,' and you wonder what he was on. I wish I had some."

Detail-rich songs like "Walter Reed" and "The Television Set Waltz" link together like conversations embedded in the walls of the same mid-century hotel. Happily, this structure is as mercifully loose as Penn's melodies are tight.

ANN POWERS

DOWNLOAD: "Walter Reed," "The Television Set Waltz"

THE POSIES

EVERY KIND OF LIGHT

★★★

RYKODISC

Beatles-adoring Seattle cult heroes chime on

The Posies were the Seattle band that didn't fit: In the early-'90s heyday of grunge, they were pop-sodden nice guys writing heartfelt tunes full of guitars that chimed where everyone else was feeding back. They had their cup of coffee with a major label, they fought and broke up; now, with stakes low—no expectations to meet—they produce their first album in seven years. And while they once sounded behind the times, they now sound outside time, with songs evoking about 30 years of guitar pop, in the vein of R.E.M. and Fountains of Wayne, though nowhere near as original. Even when they take shots at the Commander in Chief on "Could He Treat You Better" or at the almighty dollar on "It's Great to Be Here Again," they sound more involved with nibbling on a hook than they are with the state of the world.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "It's Great to Be Here Again," "Last Crawl," "I Finally Found a Jungle I Like"

RUPEE

1 ON 1 ★★★

ATLANTIC

No, he's not Jamaican. Yes, Rupee sings sweet Caribbean music

The mission: Let folks know that Caribbean music doesn't begin and end with reggae. The man who chose to accept it: Rupee, a Barbados-born singer whose debut is a crossover-ready intro to soca music, which sounds like →

THE CD WE'RE TOTALLY GAY FOR!

TRANSPLANTS

HAUNTED CITIES ★★★★★

LA SALLE/ATLANTIC

A punk rock supergroup that's far more than a side project

Their other car is a Lexus. But when Rancid singer Tim Armstrong and blink-182 drummer Travis Barker get together with skuzzy pal Rob Aston, their Transplants hobby is one big punk-rock demolition derby, leaving skid marks across fame, fortune and great expectations. *Haunted Cities*, their second CD, is more tuneful and less experimental than their debut, with three-chord throat-shredding ruminations on the street-urchin life—"Some of my friends sell records, some of my friends sell drugs," Armstrong shouts nonjudgmentally over a drum and bass beat on

the first single, "Gangsters and Thugs." *Haunted Cities* features guest appearances from assorted Dilated Peoples, Cypress Hill and Boo-Yaa Tribesters. There's also a Calisoul crooner ("What I Can't Describe") that's pure Sugar Ray, and with another song called "Killafornia," this is a record rooted in the Golden State, a state of mind in which everything is promised, and then comes the price tag. It makes desperation sound fun.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "Gangsters and Thugs," "American Guns," "Crash and Burn"



Transplants: "We're lumberjacks and we're OK."



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Hey, Jason, why do you keep hitting yourself?

ALPHABET SOUP

Virginia singer is like Sting—with added rapping!

JASON MRAZ

MR. A-Z ★★★

ATLANTIC RECORDS

JASON MRAZ MUST have been bummed when his low-key, jammy-wammy 2002 debut, *Waiting for My Rocket to Come*, turned into a hit. Now what was he supposed to do? He was all over MTV; magazines were calling him cute. What if no one took him seriously? What if they didn't understand he was a real musician, like Sting, not an overnight pop sensation?

A chorus of imaginary critics apparently clamoring in his head, he came up with a solu-

tion that could carry a Broadway musical. The title is no idle threat; tracks skip from pop-flavored hip-hop to breezy adult alternative, suave bossa nova, even a momentary lapse into opera. "Did You Get My Message?" merges late-night R&B with Beatles harmonies, while "Please Don't Tell Her" is an Aerosmith-inspired power ballad.

The problem isn't style—it's substance. Mraz's songwriting chops leave plenty to be desired; even Lillywhite couldn't talk him out of an embarrassment like "Everyone might find me foolish to not be counting on the sun/But your mouth is my umbrella and I'm holding your tongue." Another minor point: Never, ever rhyme "luna"

with "moon-a." Mraz seemed preachy and smug on *Rocket*, but the music offered rootsy relief; here, it never relaxes. Mraz should quit talking about depth and simply deliver it. "The sophomore slump is an uphill battle," he complains in the self-incriminating "Word-play." Next time, maybe he'll allow himself to coast.

KAREN SCHOEMER
DOWNLOAD: "Clockwatching," "Please Don't Tell Her"

HIS TENOR COULD CARRY A BROADWAY MUSICAL.

tion for his follow-up: Craft an enormously ambitious art-pop extravaganza that takes in a dazzling array of styles, tackles weighty questions about life and love and leaves no doubt about his boy-wonder status. Enlist a prestige producer, Steve Lillywhite (U2, Dave Matthews Band), to bedeck the busily worded compositions with cellos, scratched beats, timbales, electronic blips and, for the finale, a choir. Sit back and wait for the Grammys to roll in.

As well they might. *Mr. A-Z* is impressive at times: Mraz switches easily between soft-spoken rap rhymes and a boyish, pitch-perfect tenor

JASON MRAZ'S CURRENT LISTENING

RAUL MIDÓN
STATE OF MIND MANHATTAN

G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE
PHILADELPHIC 550 MUSIC

THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

Sufjan Stevens:
Offering whimsical folk songs, ice cream.



caffeinated calypso. Spiking soca rhythms with R&B melodies, Rupee crafts catchy pick-me-up tunes—some of which toe the line between sweet and saccharine. He has the vocal depth to pull off a ballad—"Woman (I'll Always Be There)" pays tribute to his mother, a victim of AIDS—but his prime tracks are Carnival-ready party jams like "Tempted to Touch"; Rupee's rich yet cool voice is set against hot soca beats, faster and more musical than dancehall rhythms. It's almost enough to make Jamaica take a backseat.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "You Never Know," "What Happens in de Party"

SECRET MACHINES

THE ROAD LEADS WHERE IT'S LED ★★★

REPRISE

NYC riffmongers trip through their record collections—emphasis on trip

If you've ever wondered what Bob Dylan would sound like on sizzurp, look no further. On their self-consciously epic 2004 debut, this Dallas-bred, Brooklyn-based trio made '70s stoner rock for Gen-Y hipsters. This EP goes even further: After the Zeppelin-referencing title stomper and a new disco-punk jam called "Better Bring Your Friends," it's all covers, ranging from mystical Irish hippie Van Morrison to Krautrock pioneers Harmonia. With "Money (That's What I Want)," the Machines turn an old Motown/Beat-

les rave-up into a hypnotic lament for broke indie-rockers, while "Girl From the North Country" takes Bob Dylan's rural-Minnesota folk and blasts it into the cosmos. Best of all: The 37-minute running time means you won't have to wait long to raid 7-Eleven for more Doritos.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Money (That's What I Want)," "Girl From the North Country," "Better Bring Your Friends"

BRIAN SETZER

ROCKABILLY RIOT VOL. ONE: A TRIBUTE TO SUN RECORDS ★★★

SURFDOD

A suitably noisy nod to the Memphis label that invented rock & roll

Having all but disappeared since his 2000 decision to wash that saxes-gone-wild swing band out of his hair and re-anoint himself with the greasy kid stuff of his Stray Cats youth, Brian Setzer works it way down to the roots with an all-covers homage to the place where the stuff was first bottled. He mostly steers clear of the obvious—a wise move, since he's least effective trying to tackle such signature items as Carl Perkins's "Blue Suede Shoes," Charlie Rich's "Lonely Weekends" and Johnny Cash's "Get Rhythm." He's far more effective letting his speed-demon guitar burn rubber as he fires up lesser-known hot rod classics like Warren Smith's "Rock 'n' Roll Ruby," Oscar Wills's "Flatfoot Sam" and Ray Harris's "Lonely Wolf." A wolf in cat's clothing, of course.

BILLY ALTMAN

DOWNLOAD: "Flatfoot Sam," "Lonely Wolf"

SUFJAN STEVENS

ILLINOIS ★★★

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Wacko singer visits the *Prairie State*, fails to write a song about Mike Ditka

There are plenty of reasons to be wiggled out by 30-year-old Sufjan (pronounced SOOF-yan) Stevens: He writes pop-folk songs about Super-

I LOVE THIS CD!



MILA KUNIS
ACTRESS, THAT
'70S SHOW

GWEN STEFANI
LOVE. ANGEL. MUSIC. BABY
(INTERSCOPE)

"It's a really fun, poppy album. I love Gwen. She's always so entertaining to watch."

OKIE DOKEY!

Twangy songwriter longs for olden days, mandolins

SON VOLT

OKEMAH AND THE MELODY OF RIOT ★★

TRANSMIT SOUND/LEGACY

READY FOR A declaration of dependence? Jay Farrar's latest album, and the first Son Volt record in seven years, begins with "words of Woody Guthrie ringing in my head" (it's named for the Oklahoma town Guthrie grew up in), then proceeds down Highway 61 with nods to Bob Dylan and Lead Belly. These evocations are meant to be political, a parallel to song three, the Bush-bashing allegory "Jet Pilot," as if, in the gloom of fall 2004, Farrar found solace in the folk-song gods he shares with Bruce Springsteen and Air America.

Unless his deadpan is miles deep, the new Farrar numbers "6 String Belief" and "Gramophone" long for American popular music traditions to seize the forefront of a much-needed grassroots revolution. He wants to see "juke joints and honkytonks collide, sing the burdens, the hardships of life." Sure, as the preacher and bleaker member of alt-country pioneers Uncle Tupelo, Farrar has always been a reactionary sort of progressive. But he's never tried so actively to fuse prescriptive politics into that mix, and the move feels suspect, the most marketed aspect of a comeback record. As even Karl Marx pointed out, right wing art that's closely observed and full of contradictions does more good than fuzzy liberalism. And this

Jay Farrar searches for the guy who swiped his mustache.



album uses fuzzy convictions the way diners use comfort food.

Two tracks in the middle switch to a somewhat more plausible focus of homage: R.E.M., whose guitarist Peter Buck produced Uncle Tupelo. "Who" and "Endless War" sound like *Fables of the Reconstruction* minus Michael Stipe's complexity and his band's vision of Southern bohemia. Also, R.E.M. operated as a unit. Son Volt, with all new

members slapped into place to play a set of lyrics about solidarity, feels a lot more like a brand that Farrar decided to revive.

ERIC WEISBARD

DOWNLOAD: "Who"

JAY FARRAR'S CURRENT LISTENING

SUN KIL MOON
GHOSTS OF THE GREAT HIGHWAY/JETSET

HAYDEN
SKYSCRAPER NATIONAL PARK/BADMAN

man and serial killers, and occasionally performs them in a giant swan costume. Yet despite such on-the-surface whimsy, *Illinois*—the second in a promised 50-album series chronicling every U.S. state—is doggedly sincere. When Stevens stretches out his simple acoustic ditties with big-ambition arrangements, as on the unfortunately titled "Come On! Feel the Illinois!," he turns a pleasant-enough Sunday-drive serenade into a multilayered celebration of ingenuity; when he reigns it all in, a song like "John Wayne Gacy, Jr." becomes as haunting as its titular serial killer. It's a mesmerizing history lesson.

BRIAN RAFTERY

DOWNLOAD: "Jacksonville," "Chicago"

THOR

THOR AGAINST THE WORLD ★★

SMOG VEIL

Muscle-bound Canuck with a broadsword likes the fat-bottomed girls

Jon Miki Thor is a heavy metal renaissance man, a former Mr. USA with biceps of steel and a heart of glass. On the Vancouver native's seventh CD (following cassette- and vinyl-only releases dating back to the mid-'70s) the caped singer alternates upper-register shout-alongs about warring dragons with sad-eyed tales of lost love underscored by harmonica, piano and sax. Unlike other metal muscleheads, →

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SHOUT
FACTORY

WORLD POKER TOUR

Ying Yang Twins
host *Antiques*
Roadshow: Ghetto
Edition.



TWIN KILLINGS

Hot beats and hotter words from an Atlanta rap duo

YING YANG TWINS

U.S.A.: UNITED STATE OF ATLANTA ★★

TVT

NO CONTEST: YING Yang Twins' "Wait (The Whisper Song)" is 2005's most striking single. The radically emaciated structure—a four-note sequence of 808 bass-thud, a few finger-snaps and a faint rustle of hi-hat—eclipses even previous pinnacles of minimalism like the Neptunes-produced Clipse hit "Grindin'." Yet many who dig the sound recoil from the words: You don't have to be PC to flinch at lines like "I'm gonna beat that pussy up."

DIG THE SOUND, RECOIL FROM THE WORDS.

If "Wait" pushes beyond your personal comfort zone, prepare to be traumatized by "Pull My Hair," the standout on the Ying Yang Twins' fourth album. Built by the Atlanta duo's audio svengali Mr. Colli-park, the track is stunning, from its growling bassline and spare snare-clicks to the eerie placement of the vocals. What comes out of Kaine and D-Roc's mouths, though, is not pretty: "Wait till you see my dick ... your ass is in trouble ... fuck you till you cry." Creepier still, U.S.A. implies that domination and degradation is what women "really want," adding

skits in which female callers tell a radio host what turns them on ("I likes it rough"). Just as you're thinking these two pigs should get lessons in love-making from Al Green, "Long Time" borrows a gorgeous chorus from Green's "Belle." Gospel crunk featuring neo-soul singer Anthony Hamilton, it's U.S.A.'s only song of devotion but, tellingly, the object of adoration is masculine (the Almighty Lord). "My Brother's Keeper" also reserves its tenderness for man-to-man relationships, wrapping lyrics about fraternal loyalty in a dreamy swirl of sound.

U.S.A. does spare a scrap of empathy for women on "Live Again," a portrait of a single mom struggling to escape strip clubs, with sweet and sad crooning from Maroon

5's Adam Levine. Like the stripper sick and tired of her dead-end job, Ying Yang Twins would like to transcend the crunk genre. But in the end, they can't resist a dollar; it's straight back to song after song in praise of ass, thongs and female compliance.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Pull My Hair," "Long Time," "Live Again"

YING YANG TWINS' CURRENT LISTENING

B.G.
THE HEART OF THE STREETS KOCH

MIKE JONES WHO IS MIKE JONES
SWISHHOUSE/ASYLUM/WARNER BROS.

THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

Thor never shies away from deflating his machismo, penning songs about getting picked on as a kid and parting the veil on his tough-guy facade. Elsewhere he tenderly professes love for large women ("Easy Woman") and lets his lady know that "our love will last forever." It makes Thor the rare badass whose heart seems to bleed just as much as his knuckles.

JASON BRACELIN

DOWNLOAD: "Glimmer," "The Coming of Thor"

T.O.K.

UNKNOWN LANGUAGE ★★

VP

They sing! They dance! They're a dancehall boy band!

This Jamaican foursome is one of a kind—literally, as their 2001 debut made them dancehall's first successful group act. That's odd, considering their musical recipe seems so obvious, a slick marketer should have cooked it up ages ago: a dose of Jamaica (deep-toned dancehall chatting, à la Bounty Killer), a helping of America (high-pitched R&B harmonizing, à la 'N Sync)—and voila! A fresh-faced dancehall supergroup. With one exception—"Footprints," a mournful meditation on Jamaica's murder rate—T.O.K.'s sophomore set is a nonstop romp, a high-energy merger of innovative Jamaican producers and vocalists adept at turning their eclectic, insistent beats into singsong hits. Jingle-like choruses let ladies sing along; gruff verses let fellas in on the party. To put it mildly, the end result is hotter than 98°.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Survivor," "Footprints," "Fire Fire"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

JERMAINE DUPRI PRESENTS
... YOUNG, FLY & FLASHY,
VOL. 1 ★★

VIRGIN

Kris Kross—discovering Atlanta
hitmaker shows off his latest finds

For all his finesse as a producer, Jermaine Dupri's just a so-so Hef. On "Gotta Getcha" he offers, in unintentionally comic fashion, "check books, credit cards, all that shit" to a potential conquest. Even Donald Trump's flyer than that! Luckily, this compilation of streamlined crunk has enough bounce to overcome Dupri's often heavy-handed self-promotion. On "Throw'd Off," newcomer T. Waters shows he's got some of 50 Cent's casual, mouthwatering charisma. Elsewhere the booming timpanis and hyperactive synths on a remix of Dem Franchise Boyz' "I Think They Like Me"

Jaguar Wright
hides a vicious
case of pink eye.



nicely punctuate swaggering cameos from Dupri, Da Brat and Bow Wow. More flashy fun like that, and less naked hard sell, please.

G. BEATO

DOWNLOAD: Dem Franchise Boyz, "I Think They Like Me (So So Def Remix)"; Kato, "So What"

VIRUS SYNDICATE

THE WORK RELATED ILLNESS
★★★★

PLANET MU

"Gunchester" crew rap brutal-and-British lyrics over techno rhythms

Although grime is undoubtedly the U.K.'s answer to hip-hop, the scene has been overwhelmingly concentrated in London. But now, with the emergence of crews like Manchester's Virus Syndicate, this brash genre is spreading to other multiracial towns across Britain and finally becoming a truly national sound. No one would accuse rappers JSD, Nika D and Goldfinger of dramatically expanding grime's thematic range. But their North-of-England accents give the same-old-same-old (dissing other MCs, humiliating girls, celebrating their own skills) a refreshingly different flow. And Mark One's abrasively futuristic production, all colon-spasm bass and migraine-twinge synth, is consistently arresting. Ironically, the most exciting tune is the most quaint-sounding: the old skool, rave-flavored "Major List MCs" has the madcap fairground feel of vintage Prodigy.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Major List MCs," "Clockwork," "Girls"

I LOVE THIS CD!



MICHAEL CLARKE
DUNCAN
ACTOR, THE GREEN
MILE

50 CENT
THE MASSACRE
(SHADY/INTERSCOPE)

"I listen to rap when I work out, and if I need a really intense workout, 50's album really gets me pumped up."

JAGUAR WRIGHT

DIVORCING NEO 2 MARRY SOUL ★★

SONG/ARTEMIS

Jay-Z's *Unplugged* sidekick fronts a smart, sexy R&B album

With props and backup work from the Roots and Jay-Z and a boost from a Coca-Cola ad, Jaguar Wright's 2002 debut sold respectably. But this is where she gets to prove she's more than an intelligent sidekick, and, unlike so many given that chance, she nails it. In real life the married mother of two children, she's happy to voice that perspective. But she has the imagination and commercial hunger to assume less settled personas—casually mistreated in "Timing," gold-digging and proud in "One More Drink," eager to get down to bizness in "My Place." Also, Wright doesn't equate songwriting with atmospherics. These tunes aren't quite hooky and probably shouldn't be. But they have definition, and she's singer enough to make each one stand and assert itself.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "Woman 2 Woman," "One More Drink"

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST NEW RELEASES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



COLDPLAY X&Y

CAPITOL

Chris Martin's crew are at their heart-melting, knee-weakening best on this Wembley-sized masterpiece.



SHAKIRA FIJACIÓN ORAL VOL. 1

EPIC

Buzzy New Wave and breathy ballads—all en español—from the hottest Colombian export since Juan Valdez.



FEIST LET IT DIE

CHERRY TREE/INTERSCOPE

Bee Gees covers and swoony torch songs from a Canadian chanteuse. Like Norah Jones, only cool.



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN DEVILS & DUST

COLUMBIA

On his spare, haunting 13th album, the Boss battles private demons and gives hope to those doing the same.



THE PONYS CELEBRATION CASTLE

IN THE RED

A delightfully dis-heavy second album from four bratty Chicagoans. The postpunk revival's answer to Jay-Z.



THE WHITE STRIPES GET BEHIND ME SATAN

THIRD MAN/V2

Jack trades his guitar for a piano, Meg gets funky and together they make their best album yet.

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THE

40

MOST
POPULAR
SONGS IN
AMERICA

IT'S A THUGTASTIC TOP THREE, BUT EVEN ALLEGED CARJACKER DMX IS NO MATCH WHEN KELLS AND THE GAME GET TOGETHER

"WAIT A SEC ...
LEMMIE SEE
YOUR I.D."

1

R. KELLY

"PLAYA'S ONLY"

TP.3 RELOADED

Fresh on the heels of R. Kelly's five-part R&B miniseries about hiding in closets, secretly gay husbands and misplaced condoms comes this Scott Storch-produced club jam about, er, hanging out in the club. This summer you may be able to catch R. Kelly in court, praying jurors will "pull a Jacko."

HOW WE DID IT

The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay and album sales. Provided by HITSDailyDouble.com: "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a Web site."

daily
double

POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"PLAYA'S ONLY"	R. KELLY FEAT. THE GAME	TP.3 RELOADED JIVE
2	"GIVE 'EM WHAT THEY WANT"	DMX	HERE WE GO AGAIN RUFF RYDERS/DEF JAM
3	"GIVE ME THAT"	WEBBIE	SAVAGE LIFE ASYLUM/WARNER BROS
4	"WE BELONG TOGETHER"	MARIAH CAREY	THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI ISLAND/IDJ
5	"YOUR TIME HAS COME"	AUDIOSLAVE	OUT OF EXILE EPIC/INTERSCOPE
6	"BEHIND THESE HAZEL EYES"	KELLY CLARKSON	BREAKAWAY RCA/IMG
7	"BEST OF YOU"	FOO FIGHTERS	IN YOUR HONOR RCA
8	"SPEED OF SOUND"	COLDPLAY	X&Y CAPITOL
9	"FEEL GOOD INC."	GORILLAZ	DEMON DAYS VIRGIN
10	"LOSE CONTROL"	MISSY ELLIOTT	THE COOKBOOK VIOLATOR/ATLANTIC
11	"CAN'T REPEAT"	THE OFFSPRING	GREATEST HITS COLUMBIA
12	"HAVEN'T FOUND"	PRAS	WIN LOSE OR DRAW UNIVERSAL
13	"DON'T PHUNK WITH MY HEART"	BLACK EYED PEAS	MONKEY BUSINESS A&M/INTERSCOPE
14	"INCOMPLETE"	BACKSTREET BOYS	NEVER GONE JIVE
15	"BEVERLY HILLS"	WEEZER	MAKE BELIEVE Geffen
16	"HOLIDAY"	GREEN DAY	AMERICAN IDIOT REPRISE
17	"HOLLABACK GIRL"	GWEN STEFANI	LOVE. ANGEL. MUSIC. BABY. INTERSCOPE
18	"DREAMS"	THE GAME	THE DOCUMENTARY AFTERMATH/G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE
19	"JUST A LIL BIT"	50 CENT	THE MASSACRE SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE
20	"COLORS"	CROSSFADE	CROSSFADE COLUMBIA
21	"LET ME HOLD YOU"	BOW WOW	WANTED COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN
22	"SUGAR, WE'RE GOIN' DOWN"	FALL OUT BOY	FROM UNDER THE CORK TREE ISLAND/IDJ
23	"AN HONEST MISTAKE"	THE BRAVERY	THE BRAVERY ISLAND/IDJ
24	"LONELY NO MORE"	ROB THOMAS	SOMETHING TO BE ATLANTIC
25	"MAKE A MOVE"	INCUBUS	STEALTH: MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE EPIC
26	"BUG EYES"	DREDG	CATCH WITHOUT ARMS INTERSCOPE
27	"SPOILED"	JOSS STONE	MIND, BODY & SOUL S-CURVE/VIRGIN
28	"TRAPPED IN THE CLOSET CH. 1"	R. KELLY	TP.3 RELOADED JIVE
29	"COLLIDE"	HOWIE DAY	STOP ALL THE WORLD NOW EPIC
30	"ALL THESE THINGS THAT I'VE DONE"	THE KILLERS	HOT FUSS ISLAND/IDJ
31	"SAY SOMETHIN'"	MARIAH CAREY	THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI ISLAND/IDJ
32	"OH"	CIARA	GOODIES LAFACE/ZLG
33	"THESE WORDS"	NATASHA BEDINGFIELD	UNWRITTEN EPIC
34	"TELL ME"	BOBBY VALENTINO	BOBBY VALENTINO DTP/DEF JAM/IDJ
35	"PIMPIN' ALL OVER THE WORLD"	LUDACRIS	THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT DEF JAM SOUTH/IDJ
36	"CATER 2 U"	DESTINY'S CHILD	DESTINY FULFILLED COLUMBIA
37	"THIS IS HOW A HEART BREAKS"	ROB THOMAS	SOMETHING TO BE ATLANTIC
38	"I TURN MY CAMERA ON"	SPOON	GIMME FICTION MERGE
39	"CHARIOT"	GAVIN DEGRAW	CHARIOT STRIPPED J RECORDS
40	"REMEDY"	SEETHER	KARMA AND EFFECT WIND-UP

26

DREDG

"BUG EYES"

CATCH WITHOUT ARMS

This California art-metal foursome are known for raffling off their own original paintings and works of art at their live shows—think Incubus or System of a Down crossed with Bob Ross. You can snag your own masterpiece this month as they wrap up live dates in the U.K. and the Netherlands, or catch them next month, when they kick off an American headlining tour.



33

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

"THESE WORDS"

UNWRITTEN

This 22-year-old London beauty and her pop-star big brother Daniel are England's answer to Janet and Michael—only without the nipple-exposing ... and the botched plastic surgery ... and the monkeys. Her debut, led by this love song about how hard it is to write love songs, is already triple-platinum in the U.K., and will be released Stateside this month.



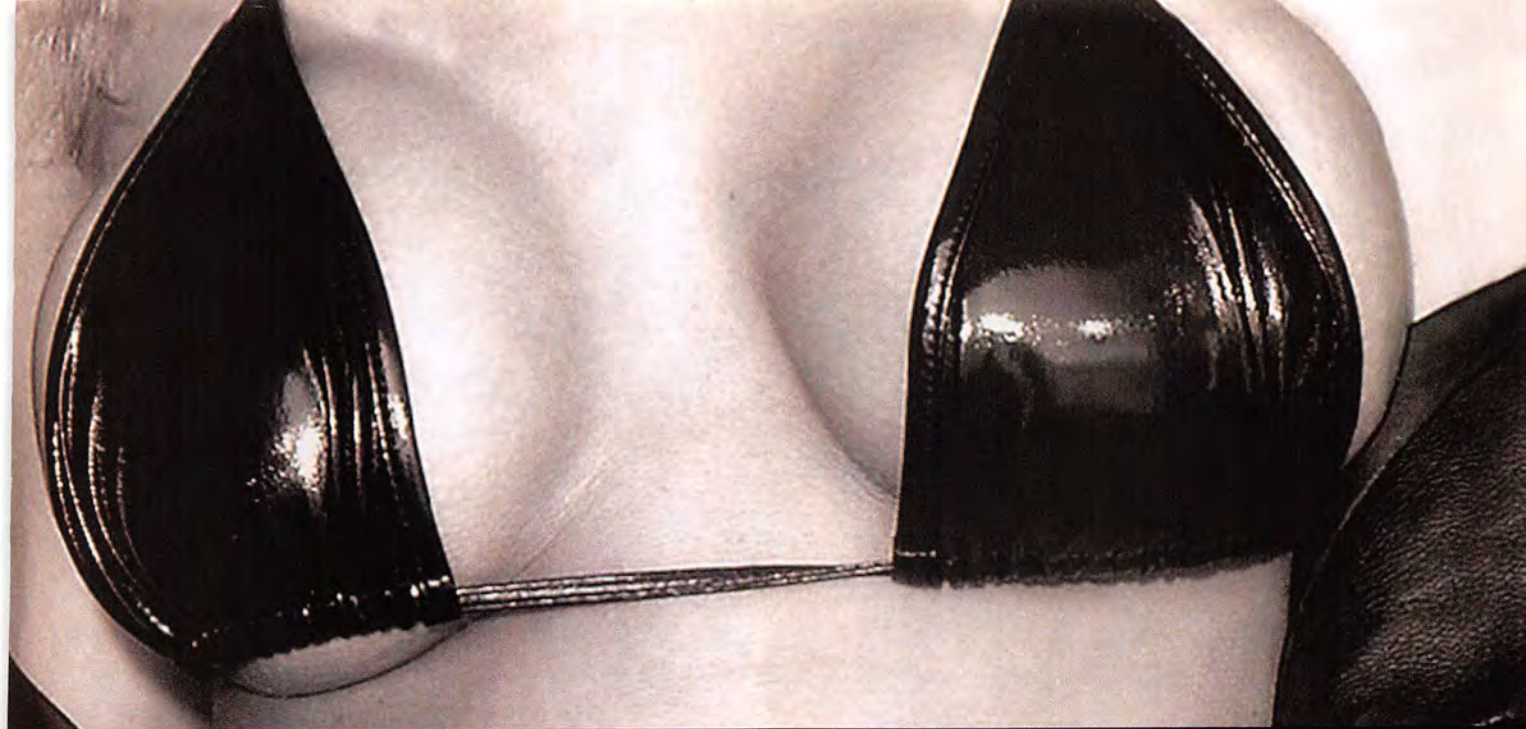
38

SPOON

"I TURN MY CAMERA ON"

GIMME FICTION

Remember when dorky Napoleon Dynamite brought the whole school to its feet with his awkward yet funky dance moves? That's what these gawky Texas slackers sound like on this disco-y jam. Earlier this summer they wowed rock nerds from coast to coast at the Coachella and Siren festivals; this month, catch them at Lollapalooza in Chicago.



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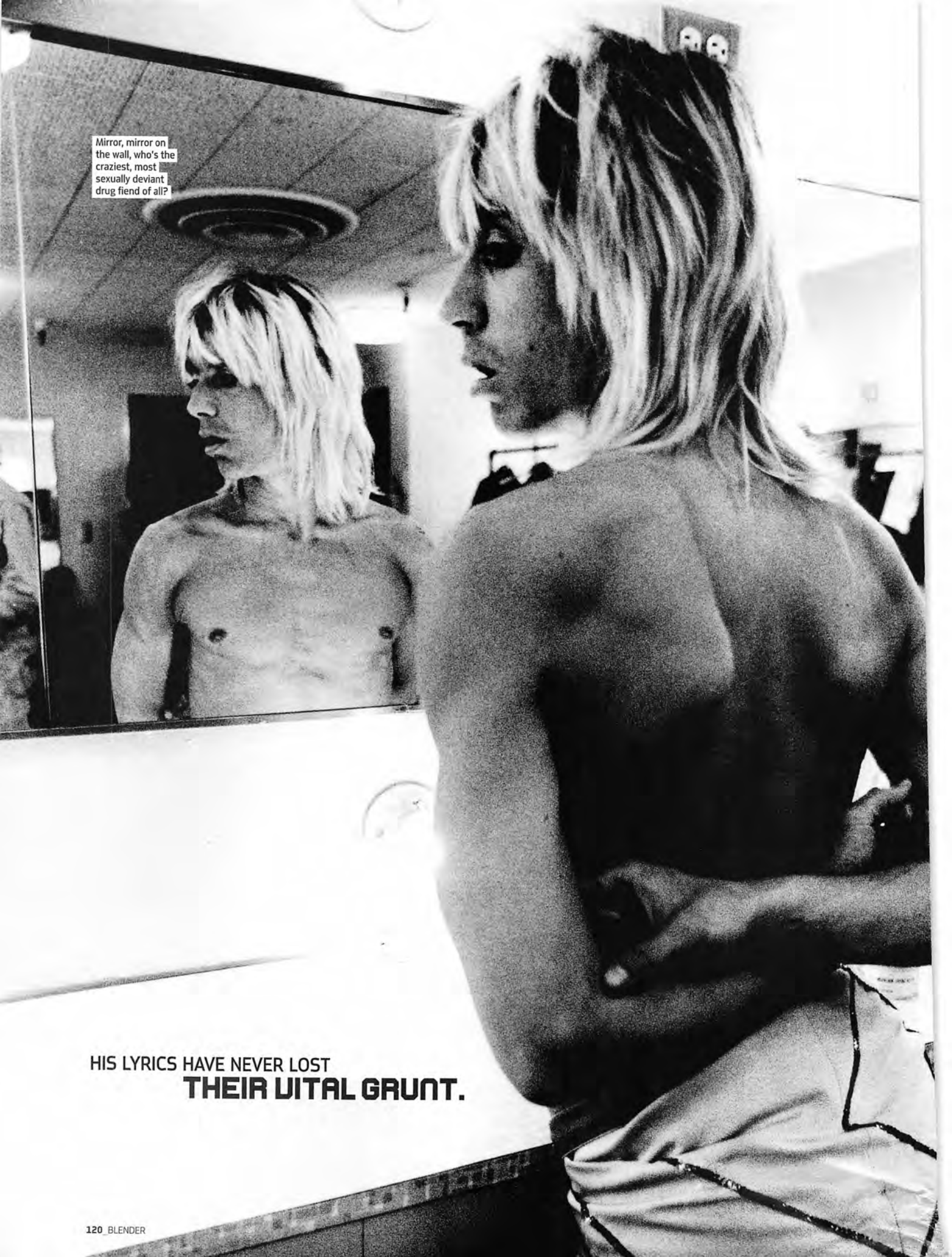
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A black and white photograph of a man with long, light-colored hair, possibly blonde or grey, looking into a mirror. He is shirtless and has his arms crossed. The mirror reflects his image. The background is slightly out of focus, showing what appears to be a bathroom or dressing room with a sink and some items on a shelf.

Mirror, mirror on
the wall, who's the
craziest, most
sexually deviant
drug fiend of all?

HIS LYRICS HAVE NEVER LOST
THEIR VITAL GRUNT.

NOTORIOUS I.G.

FROM MUTILATING SAVAGE TO RESPECTED ELDER: A PUNK-ROCK JOURNEY

IGGY POP A MILLION IN PRIZES

★★★★

VIRGIN/EMI

WHEN POP MUSICIANS realize they're icons, bad things usually happen: somber B&W photos, poetry collections. For Iggy Pop, though, legend was just the thing.

Pop's infamy erupted early and with adolescent force. He began his career fronting the Psychedelic Stooges as Jimmy Osterberg, just another peon in Michigan's anarchic, artsy noise scene, but soon he noticed that his gifts exceeded those of the average freak. Like a high school boy looking around the locker room and noticing that his endowment is unusually prodigious, little Jimmy blossomed. The tumescent butterfly became Iggy, the Id of Pop, crushing glass into his chest and showing how boneshakingly real rock could get.

Iggy Pop's five decades of music, thoroughly documented on this 38-track anthology, have been a continuation of that bloody self-realization. His relentlessly expressed lust and frustration touch rock's most primal place of violent desire, but this Id was always a Superego, too, supremely aware of the impact his rampant ways would have on society and his own soul. His music lets loose what's forgotten in polite society—the brute drive of sex, the rage of deprivation and, most of all, decadent America's endless need for more—but it also dwells on those urges, contemplating them, finding humor and pathos in the chaos.

A Million in Prizes unites material from Pop's radical early years and all that's followed, offering the big picture that other comps, focused on his solo efforts, couldn't provide. The 10 Stooges cuts still trash the room; though he found worthy collaborators afterward, Pop could only originate once, and this band was his big bang. The original lineup makes simplicity endlessly productive: Ron Asheton went fuzz-wild on guitar as drummer Scott Asheton and bassist Dave Alexander paid relentless homage to the restless pound of the Bo

Diddley beat. Pop's first lyrics recall a toddler learning to talk; they're inelegant, but comprehension lurks behind the babble.

The Stooges were trouble from the start, and internal tensions plus drugs added up to rapid self-destruction. David Bowie bailed them out, arranging for the band to record 1973's *Raw Power*, which wound up a punk Bible. Iggy's lyrics had grown more expressive without losing their vital grunt. *A Million in Prizes* includes a couple of outtakes from this key recording, as well as a version of "Nightclubbing" Iggy recorded while the Stooges were ripping themselves to shreds.

After selling about 10 copies of their three albums, the band imploded. Pop became a homeless druggie, then checked into a mental hospital. His friendship with Bowie solidified, and both decamped to Berlin. This is when Iggy started to get funny—on "Lust For Life" he casts a wry eye on his own visceral shtick. Parting with Bowie led to a string of so-so albums in the 1980s, but each boasted at least one track showing Pop's old spirit, and here he picks the best, from the slimy "Pleasure" to the nearly poignant "Cry for Love."

By the '90s, Pop was a respected elder, his music enlivening TV ads and his output alternating between star-studded events and more relaxed sessions with his touring bands. He duetted hilariously with Deborah Harry of Blondie on a Cole Porter cover and even fell victim to the poetry urge, attempting spoken word. Lately he's been circling his birthplace again—"Skull Ring," the title track from his last CD and the final cut here, reunites him with the Asheton brothers. It's a stomper, but it's also philosophical, with Pop interrupting his chant for more girls and cars to reflect on debauchery. "My life is dirtied, my mind is loaded," he growls thoughtfully. And that's what *A Million in Prizes* reminds us: Pop's biggie, much extolled by him, is not only the one in his pants. It's the one in his noggin.

ANN POWERS

DOWNLOAD: "1969," "Success," "Lust for Life"

UNDER THE INFLUENCES

FROM THE GODFATHER OF SOUL TO *THE GODFATHER*, IGGY REVEALS HIS INSPIRATIONS

The first record I bought was "Red River Rock" by Johnny and the Hurricanes. I had a dollar from mowing lawns, and it was enough to buy music by a guy with a blonde pompadour and a tenor sax between his legs. The album was terrible.

By the time I was 18, I was listening to everything from Ray Charles to Bartók. I had a delayed exposure to R&B and rock—my parents were trying to protect me, which only worked as long as they had me under lock and key. And then I was like, "Whoaaaa! This is cool!"

The summer after I turned 18, Bob Dylan and the Band played the Masonic Auditorium in Detroit during his acoustic/electric tour. Boy, was that fucking good.

Around the same time, I was like, "Holy shit, there's John Cage!" There were concerts that consisted of a woman tied up nude trying to play the cello while a man beats on a piano with hammers!

I read *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, and I wanted to be like that: strong, uncomplicated, focused, with a clear mission.

David Bowie really threw me the keys to the library. He enjoys sharing his enthusiasms; there is an English tradition of developing one's art through discussion, and I was a fly on the wall.

My stage act is based on the standard R&B show, as performed by Joe Tex, Otis Redding, James Brown, James Brown and James Brown. You can go, "Good god!" and do a split, or you can go, "Good god!" and throw up. As long as it's on the right drumbeat, it'll be cool.

STEVE KANDELL



CAN

FUTURE DAYS ★★★★★

SOON OVER BABALUMA

★★★★★

LANDED ★★★

UNLIMITED EDITION ★★★★★

MUTE

Funky Germans—how's that for an oxymoron?—influenced a clan of trance rockers with this mid-'70s peak

Among Can fans, consensus decrees that the seething voodoo funk of 1971's *Tago Mago* represents the group's zenith. But, although the albums that followed seem light-hearted compared with their earlier Velvet-Underground-meets-James-Brown hypnagogues, the playing still roils with a supple inventiveness verging on the supernatural. Their improvised-in-the-studio, mostly instrumental music was never more cinematic than on *Future Days*' 20-minute-long idyll "Bel Air." And it was never more telepathically uncanny than on *Babaluma's* "Chain Reaction/Quantum Physics," a song-suite that takes listeners to the remotest recesses of the cosmos. Whimsy

THE SCORE

★★★★★

A CLASSIC

★★★★

GREAT

★★★

GOOD

★★

MEDIocre

★

FOUL

sets in on *Landed*, although the musky, violin-laced exoticism of "Half Past One" is haunting, and "Unfinished" intimidates with its abstract noise. *Unlimited Edition*, a collection of 1968-'75 outtakes, is a trove of delightful oddities, like "Mother Upduff," which wraps psycho-jazz squall around a macabre storyline about death during a vacation. These remasters add no new tracks but vastly improve on the

earlier hissy, drab CD transfers, bringing out the ultra-vivid textures and exquisite details of Can's playing as never before.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Moonshake," "Come Sta, La Luna," "Quantum Physics," "Half Past One," "Mother Upduff"

RAY CHARLES

FRIENDSHIP ★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Back in 1984, the Genius of Everything cut a strong duets album

All respect to the indefatigable Ray Charles for making music till he died, but in his last quarter-century a lot of what reached record did the dirty with mediocrity. So give thanks for the duet trick, which worked great on 2004's farewell *Genius Loves Company* and pretty darn good on the only memorable album of his Nashville foray. Not all his partners aged as well as Brother Ray—the Oak Ridge Boys, Janie Fricke (don't ask). But Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and George Jones sure did, so maybe this was where they figured out how—the Jones duet especially is a late highlight of both catalogues. And though their two

bonus cuts are off concept, Tony Bennett and Billy Joel obviously love genius.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "We Didn't See a Thing" (with George Jones), "Crazy Old Soldier" (with Johnny Cash)

CULTURE CLUB

GREATEST HITS ★★★

VIRGIN/EMI

Prophet of polysexual soul just couldn't keep it up towards the end

So elaborately dressed it's a wonder he never got his own line of Barbie outfits, Boy George was one of the true superstars of the '80s. Witty, astonishingly coutured and unrepentantly homosexual, he sang with enough wounded feeling to universalize his band's otherwise lightweight pop-soul. This bravely chronological collection opens with the hits that feminized pop; from the cross-dressing hoedown of "Karma Chameleon" to the acrobatic Motown of "Church of the Poison Mind," these singles reassembled pop's shared history in wonderful new shapes. But success quickly undid Culture Club, and George's attention shifted to heroin. Only one later

SPUN OUT

This landmark of DJ mixing is better when the DJ is silent

DJ SHADOW

ENDTRODUCING ... ★★★

Geffen

IN ONE OF Martin Amis's funnier novels, the hero is reading a book whose massive acclaim so puzzles him that he keeps flipping to the author bio, scanning for something like "Shrugging off the effects of a full lobotomy ..." The book would be remarkable, he thinks, only if the author had written it with his foot. That's not quite the case here, but the comparison is instructive.

An assured mix of epicurean beats and trippy atmospheres, DJ Shadow's full-length debut is most notable for the fact that its then-24-year-old creator made it using only turntables and a sampler in his suburban California bedroom, heralding the underground hip-hop of the '90s. With it, b-boy-identified Josh Davis turned his canny mixing skills and colossal LP collection into a cult phenomenon.

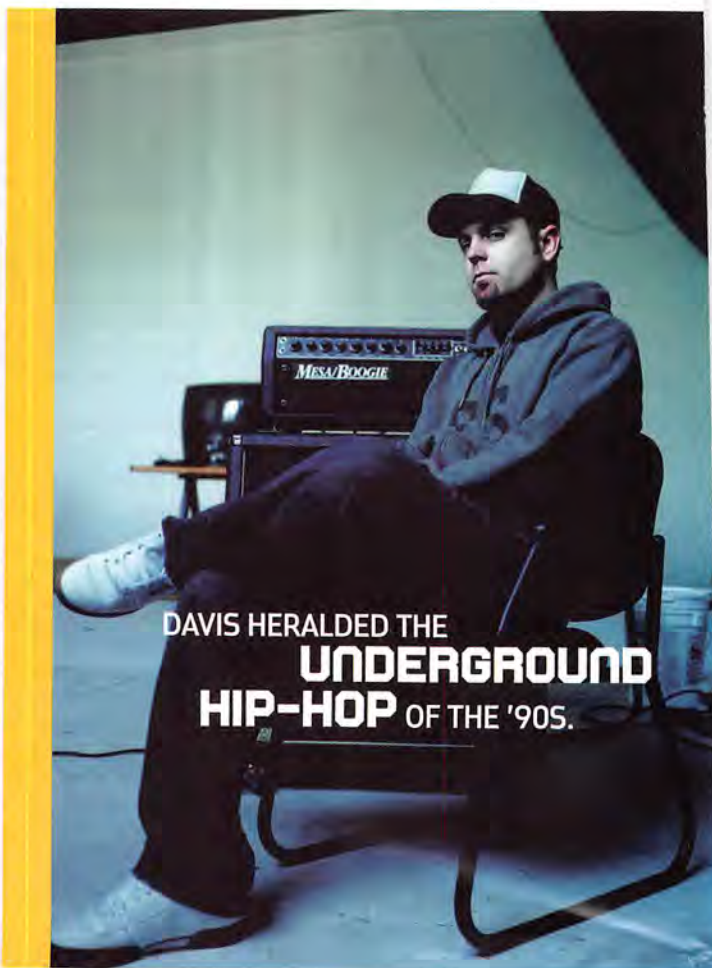
Replacing the Top 40 loops of '90s rap with vinyl obscurantism,

Davis brought a Zen-like concentration to these mid-tempo headnods. With its blend of gristly funk drums, horn longtones, soul-jazz chords and orchestral washes, the CD is pleasantly immersive, if sometimes hard to distinguish from Kitaro or some other Monster of New Age.

Hip-hop it is, though, not only in methodology but also in its ego. If the music doesn't signal enough portentousness—with mystical piano twinkles and reverb bombast—there are sampled jazzbos saying "the music's coming through me," and now, on disc two, director's commentary: "First it usually starts with a beat ... I just sort of let the track take its own direction." Tell us more, O Yoda. The extra CD has its treasures: remixes by Cut Chemist and Gift of Gab and a live track in which DJ Shadow spins a British crowd into 12 minutes of hypnagogic bliss. But be sure to hit "fade" before he starts talking again.

CHRIS NORRIS

DOWNLOAD: "DJ Shadow Live in Oxford, England, Oct. 30, 1997"



track, "The War Song," is memorable, and that's because it's the most inanely trite thing they ever recorded. A textbook case for judicious downloading.

ANDREW HARRISON

DOWNLOAD: "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?," "Karma Chameleon"

DUKE ELLINGTON

THE ESSENTIAL DUKE ELLINGTON ★★★★★

COLUMBIA/BUEBIRD/LEGACY

Monumental jazz composer and bandleader whose father was a White House butler

So prolific over five decades that a prior compilation spanned 24 discs, jazz bandleader Duke Ellington is distilled into a collegiate survey lecture on this two-CD set. The emphasis is the lifelong repertoire he recorded multiple times: all the big-name titles for newcomers, plus some rarer recorded versions to interest longtime fans. Most originated in 1920s and '30s cabarets, where vulgarity and sophistication mated like a "Creole Rhapsody." By the '40s, he could orchestrate his growling, silky players in real time more deftly than a producer now would use a 16-track studio. You hear a touch of Ellington's Newport Jazz Fest revival in 1956, a late version of the early "Black Beauty" and, finally, a Tchaikovsky arrangement. Ellington did something few musicians accomplish in their own lifetimes: He classicized himself.

ERIC WEISBARD

DOWNLOAD: "Black and Tan Fantasy," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Satin Doll"

GRANDMASTER FLASH & THE FURIOUS FIVE

THE MESSAGE ★★

GRANDMASTER FLASH

THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE ★★

DBK WORKS

Two albums from the days when DJs were inventing hip-hop

What's wondrous about the first album from this pioneering Bronx DJ and his vocal crew, large enough to divert an all-night party, is the range

hip-hop contained before it settled in: the grooves are futuristic (the electro "Scorpio"), current (a Tom Tom Club lift) or retro (the Motown spin-off "It's a Shame"), and a fantasy about meeting Stevie Wonder lightens "The Message," a topical landmark the group hated but their label rightfully demanded they release. Too bad this reissue fatally leaves off "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," the DJ's even more omnivorous showcase. A couple of years later, most of the Five had left Flash, whose second album was a weaker version of the same ancient-to-the-future Vaudeville routine: New Orleans R&B, Fats Waller and Run-DMC rips, plus a commentary ("Sign of the Times") delivered FedEx to Prince.

ERIC WEISBARD

DOWNLOAD: "The Message," "Scorpio," "Girls Love the Way He Spins"

INDIGO GIRLS

RARITIES ★

EPIC/LEGACY

Dreary folkies enlist left-wing soldiers for sappy, cover-heavy collection

For nearly two decades, the tireless, humorless Georgia duo of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have been giving lefty folk music a bad name, matching coy acoustic guitars with lazy political sloganeering. Their worst tendencies are on ample display in this dreary compilation of phoned-in covers and tossed-off originals. Fellow activists Ani Di Franco, Michael Stipe and Tom Morello (of Audioslave) contribute well-meaning cameos but can't enliven the self-righteous snooziness. Lite standards like "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters" and the timelessly mournful "I Don't Want to Talk About It" have never sounded blander, though nothing comes close to the horror of the Girls' interpretation of the Clash's stark class-war anthem "Clampdown," rudely transformed into a moist campfire strumalong.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: None

JUST-ICE

BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL ★★★★★

FRESH

A pioneering gangster rapper meets a pioneer gangster producer. Gangsterisms ensue

Back in 1986, menace was still something of a novelty in hip-hop, no matter how mean a strut their unlaced Adidas gave Run-DMC. But Brooklyn's Just-Ice was happy to play outlaw on his decidedly aggro debut, spitting bruising rhymes through a mouthful of gold teeth. →



Ol' Dirty Bastard: 1968–2004.

CLOWN PRINCE

The late, great ODB got by with a little help from his friends

OL' DIRTY BASTARD

THE DEFINITIVE OL' DIRTY BASTARD STORY

★★★★

ELEKTRA/RHINO

OL' DIRTY BASTARD'S raps always sound as if they're about to fall to pieces. His verse is jagged, full of non sequiturs—Five Percenter mythology, casual drug talk, lewd, whimsical come-ons, whatever—and careens between howls and barks. Being on record, it seemed, was Russell Jones's only hope; there, with the help of sympathetic, patient producers, he could be born again, as something whole.

This first official attempt at posthumous canonization inadvertently nails this truth—ODB benefited greatly from a bit of glue and polish. His 1995 debut, created without either of the above, featured two vivid, thrashing hits—"Brooklyn Zoo" and "Shimmy Shimmy Ya"—and little else of note. Four years and several scandals later, he reemerged under the protective wing of the Neptunes, then hitting their pop stride, who stitched a few recording-booth explosions into indelible pop.

Of these, the raucous "Got

Your Money," with a syrupy hook from Kelis, solidified the ODB legend. (It was his third and last single to receive a video—all are collected here on a bonus DVD.) But on "Recognize" and the Rick James bite "Cold Blooded," the Neptunes created sprightly digital funk vamps that retained the producers' signature snap yet were loose enough to accommodate ODB's scattershot rhymes.

Maybe the Neptunes got the idea from the slew of cameos ODB did following his debut album (two excellent ones—Mariah Carey's "Fantasy (Remix)" and Pras's "Ghetto Supastar"—are included here). Cameos might have been Dirty's most flattering medium, taking advantage of his eccentricities without giving him the keys to the house.

But listening to them is sad, because they're about ODB's limitations as much as his skills. The seams in ODB's oeuvre and his character, once antically charming, are more glaring in his absence. Perhaps his passing has afforded some perspective, or maybe we were paying attention to the wrong things all along. JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Shimmy Shimmy Ya," "Cold Blooded," "Fantasy (Remix)"

I LOVE THIS CD!



JESSE MCCARTNEY
ACTOR,
SUMMERLAND

GAVIN DEGRAW
CHARIOT (J RECORDS)

"I'm still not over listening to him. He's the man in pop-rock right now, a great lyricist. I could learn a lot from him."

Drum-machine innovator Kurtis Mantronik orchestrated a taut set of horn jabs, snapping snares and scratched-in samples that presaged what hip-hop would sound like until Dr. Dre slowed things down on *The Chronic*. But as if downing Creatine, Just-Ice wasn't to be outdone. On "Cold Gettin' Dumb," he's so busy insulting his foe that he never gets to the chorus. And on "Little Bad Johnny," when his son gets out of line, the rapper won't bail him out; the gangster credo of self-reliance is thicker than blood.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Cold Gettin' Dumb," "Little Bad Johnny"

MEGADETH

GREATEST HITS: BACK TO THE START ★★

CAPITOL/EMI

A Metallica discard puts the mega in metal

Best known lately for his meltdown cameo in Metallica's *Some Kind of Monster* documentary, Megadeth majordomo Dave Mustaine is a perfectionist oddball whose speed-metal-and-beyond career stacks up well against his former band. *Greatest Hits* traces a path back to his mid-'80s tenure as a guitarist who prized 10-ton riffs as much as 1,000-notes-per-minute solos while singing in a sometimes cartoonishly annoying snarl. The psychodrama monologues about warfare both global and internal ("Peace Sells," "Holy Wars ... The Punishment Due") gave way to more theatrical '90s suites ("Symphony of Destruction," the paranoid "Hangar 18") that affirm Mustaine was never better than when he was paired with drummer Nick Menza. The later stuff is slower, more melodic and larded with clichés: "Prince of Darkness," Dave? Hasn't that job already been taken?

GREG KOT

DOWNLOAD: "Hangar 18," "Peace Sells"

THE OFFSPRING

GREATEST HITS ★★★★★

COLUMBIA

The only disc you'll ever need from the kings of '90s joke-punk

Just in time for the latest wave of '90s nostalgia, here comes the first career-spanning collection from these SoCal pop-punkers. Relive the Clinton era with such sublimely goofy smashes as the proto-emo whine "Self Esteem" and "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)," which should have single-handedly killed rap-metal way back in 1998. Even when they're tackling issues like gang violence in "Come Out and Play (Keep 'Em Separated)" and teen pregnancy in "The Kids Aren't Alright," the Offspring can't keep a straight face; there's



Orange Juice: "Yes, for the last time, we're pulp-free!"

always a smirk in Dexter Holland's adolescent voice, or a whiff of ironic hair-band posturing in guitarist Kevin "Noodles" Wasserman's buzzing riffs. Their sense of principle never trumps their sense of humor.

AMY PHILLIPS

DOWNLOAD: "Come Out and Play (Keep 'Em Separated)," "Self Esteem"

ORANGE JUICE

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL ★★★★★

DOMINO

The godfathers of Scottish indie music get their due

Franz Ferdinand are only the latest Scottish band to owe a debt to Orange Juice; by way of payback, FF's label has rescued the Glasgow



Mark McGrath poses with his Access Hollywood hair and makeup team.

quartet's hard-to-find 1980-1981 output from the vaults. The authoritative title of *The Glasgow School*, which collects their four singles and one unreleased album for independent label Postcard, is amply justified. The band's hooray-for-fey, anti-rockist manifesto ("No more rock & roll for you," they chant) translated into terrific pop music pitched at the intersection of Chic's funky guitars and the Velvet Underground's bristling guitars, while frontman Edwyn Collins was suave lounge lizard, snake-hipped soulboy and lovelorn bookworm all at once. Back then,

their wallflower pop attracted homophobic heckles from Glasgow beer boys; in today's climate, they could scarcely sound more relevant.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD: "Simply Thrilled Honey," "Poor Old Soul (Part Two)," "Satellite City"

ESTHER PHILLIPS

JAZZ MOODS/HOT ★★★★★

EPIC/LEGACY

An R&B pro adapts to the '70s by clocking disco dollars

Niggles about great singers who trend-hop are often swallowed up by

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST REISSUES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



AT THE DRIVE-IN

THIS STATION IS NON-OPERATIONAL

FEARLESS

Fierce Texas punk from the afros who would go on to form the Mars Volta.



BILLIE HOLIDAY

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

HIP-O

Before her drug-related death at 44, Lady sang the blues like no other. This dazzling two-CD set is proof.



DEF LEPPARD

ROCK OF AGES

BLUDGEON RIFFOLA/ISLAND/UME

Slick, sweaty and dripping with hits, this best-of from the Sheffield lads is trash-rock at its trashiest.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE VERY BEST OF DEATH ROW

DEATH ROW

The gangsta's all here: From Dre to Tupac to Snoop and his Dogg Pound, a veritable who's-who of mid-'90s rap.



GANG OF FOUR

ENTERTAINMENT!

RHINO

All those hip new guitar bands you love right now? This vicious 1979 debut is what they're ripping off.



X-RAY SPEX

GERM-FREE ADOLESCENTS

CASTLE/SANCTUARY

Starring hellcat frontwoman Poly Styrene, these co-ed punks' 1978 debut ranks among Britain's best.



The Offspring never miss a 4-for-1 T-shirt sale.

their voices as history passes. A sardonic acolyte of jazz hitmaker Dinah Washington, Esther Phillips is respected for her early-'60s R&B output, especially with the Atlantic Records posse. But her commercial peak, a decade later, was her dance records with Creed Taylor and various jazz fusioners, and this ill-packaged cheapo, her only extant U.S. compilation in the style, proves disco was good for her. Sure, the Washington cover "What a Difference a Day Makes" is taken too fast. But her astringent, vibrato-laden soprano is never derailed. And it owns the socially conscious Gil Scott-Heron and Joe Cocker songs, the Duke Ellington classic, and—remarkably—Bill Withers's "Use Me."

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "Home Is Where the Hatred Is," "Black-Eyed Blues"

SUGAR RAY

THE BEST OF SUGAR RAY

★★★★

ATLANTIC/RHINO

Cali quintet discovers cheap hooks, go from metal also-rans to pop kings

"Summer won't end this summer," sings Mark McGrath in the previously unreleased "Shot of Laughter," and that's an understatement: Summer never ends in this amiable band's sun-strafed Southern California pop. Sugar Ray began as a funk-metal party act (according to the liner notes, their first gig was "a kegger

on 31st street") but hit their stride with 1997's ragga-lite smash "Fly." That song set their sonic template—gently strummed acoustic guitars, a few harmless turntable scratches, high harmonies—and established McGrath as a peroxide frat boy power-pop nerds could love. All the late-'90s hits are here, but what surprises is the quality of the earlier, snarlier material, where McGrath, tongue firmly in cheek, wails like a metal god. Three new songs, meanwhile, suggest that Sugar Ray have a few good keggers left in them.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD: "Every Morning," "When It's Over," "Answer the Phone"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO THE MUSIC OF THE SAHARA

★★★★

WORLD MUSIC NETWORK

Nomads from Libya to Mauritania while away the starry nights

Think of the fun you could have—jack this sucker up at a spotlight and you'll soon be accosted by Homeland Security goons who think there are terrorists in your trunk. But these aren't even Arabs—just Muslims who want to be left alone. Since they live in a desert vaster than Europe with a population smaller than Chicago's, they generally get their wish. And though their music incorporates cosmopolitan ideas from Dakar to Cairo, it always retains its own aura. Deep, thrumming rhythms underpin eerie chants and intent wails both male and female, the effect hypnotic, seductive and otherworldly no matter its nominal nation of origin. And somehow its exoticism isn't forbidding, generating the intensely pleasurable illusion that before all the other musics you know, there was this.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: Compagnie Jellouli & Gdih, "Al Jbal Li Dargoug Aaliya"; Tinariwen, "Alkhar Dessouf"

BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING LOST CLASSICS

FAITH NO MORE

ANGEL DUST

SLASH/REPRISE, 1992

In 1990, this spazzy Bay Area metal quintet stumbled into the mainstream with their crossover fluke "Epic." For the follow-up, they went more insane. Smashing hard rock into rap and prog, front-man Mike Patton and crew created a brilliant sonic



equivalent to the titular drug's effects—schizophrenic, restless, powerfully addictive. Their proudly pre-tentious freak show of misanthropic kindergartners and deranged cheerleaders would inspire art-rockers like the Mars Volta to continue pulverizing the envelope.

TIM GRIERSON

DOWNLOAD: "MidLife Crisis," "A Small Victory," "Land of Sunshine"

REISSUES IN BRIEF

BY JON YOUNG

John Mellencamp: "No, you can't ride in my sidecar."



THE DIRTBOMBS

IF YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE A LOOK

★★★★

IN THE RED

Proclaiming "consistency is the enemy," Mick Collins twists garage punk into cool shapes, from surreal funk ("Little Miss Chocolate Syrup") to frantic nonsense ("I'm Saving Myself for Michelle Nichols"). On a second disc of covers, the Detroit band—which features two drummers and two bassists—gleefully mangle Stevie Wonder ("Maybe Your Baby") and the Bee Gees ("I Started a Joke").

ELO

ALL OVER THE WORLD: THE VERY BEST OF ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA

★★★★

EPIC/LEGACY

Before he produced Tom Petty, Brian Wilson and the reunited Beatles, Jeff Lynne honed his hit-making skills piloting ELO in the '70s and '80s. While the pasteurized orchestral pop of "Mr. Blue Sky" and "Telephone Line" can cause brain damage in large doses, it's hard to resist those creamy-vanilla melodies.

AL GREEN

BACK UP TRAIN

★★★★

ARISTA/LEGACY

He won Godlike soul status in the '70s, but even before that, Green had mastered his trade. Though this late-'60s debut is churchier and grittier than his hits, Green's divine crooning, falsetto and all, is in full force, transforming derivative material that echoes Marvin Gaye ("Guilty") and James Brown ("I'm Reachin' Out") into a nearly sublime experience.

LOGGINS & MESSINA

THE BEST OF LOGGINS & MESSINA: SITIN' IN AGAIN

★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Producer Jim Messina (ex-Buffalo Springfield and Poco) and eager singer Kenny Loggins were responsible for the peppy, thoroughly irritating smash "Your Mama Don't Dance." Much of the duo's '70s

output is even harder to stomach, encompassing cloying folk-pop (the repulsive "House at Pooh Corner") and soggy light rockers ("Vahevala").

JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP

SCARECROW

★★★★

THE LONESOME JUBILEE

★★★★

MERCURY/ISLAND

Mellencamp peaked on these '80s albums, two of the latest four in a reissue campaign, harnessing his songwriting smarts and bully-boy swagger to make stirring populist rock. The bristling, stripped-down *Scarecrow* chronicles hard times in the heartland, and helped trigger the Farm Aid movement; highlights include "Small Town" and the satisfying anthem "R.O.C.K. in the U.S.A." *Jubilee* adds variety, via Lisa Germano's fiddle and Crystal Taliefero's gospel voice, without sacrificing power; "Cherry Bomb" is a lovely and poignant nostalgia trip.

BOB SEGER

SMOKIN' O.P.'S

★★★★

CAPITOL

Four years before his 1976 breakthrough, "Night Moves," the Motor City shouter uncorked a noisy covers album. Sporting a sandpaper rasp to equal Creedence Clearwater's John Fogerty, Seger dispatches salty ("Bo Diddley") and sweet ("If I Were a Carpenter") tunes alike with brutal vigor. Beer breath not included.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE COMPLETE MOTOWN SINGLES, VOL. 2: 1962

★★★★

HIP-O SELECT

1962 was a crucial year for Berry Gordy's company, as Motown refined the pumping R&B grooves that would soon lead to world domination. Besides blazing hits such as Marvin Gaye's "Hitch Hike" and the Marvelettes' "Playboy," this four-disc, 112-track set unearths a whole slew of equally exciting flops, among them Saundra Mallett and the Vandellas' "Carnel Walk" and Stevie Wonder's "Contract on Love."

BOB DYLAN

PART 3: LIVE AND COMPILED

He's hidden away some of his greatest songs on compilations and box sets BY DOUGLAS WOLK

EVERY
ORIGINAL
CD
REVIEWED

"I LOSE MY inspiration in the studio real easy," Bob Dylan has admitted, and *Blender* chronicled the ups and downs of his studio albums in the two previous issues. Records are just "blueprints" for his live shows, he has said, and there are hundreds of songs he has recorded but never released, due to boredom, wrongheadedness or quality control. His songs allow for reinterpretation—their significance changes depending on how he sings them on any given night, and his most famous songs resonate differently on compilation CDs than they do on his studio albums. Dylan's live records are inconsistent, but they almost never replicate the original versions of songs; he rearranges and even rewrites his repertoire onstage. So bootleggers have documented almost every note he's sung for decades, and the official *Bootleg Series*, begun in 1991, proves the merit of their illicit geekery. There's more in the vaults, too: Two CDs of pre-1967 recordings are due in September.

"It's SPF 1200. Why?"



CLASSIC

BIOGRAPH

COLUMBIA, 1985

★★★★★



Dylan's best retrospective is arranged thematically, so that old favorites and newly mined gems (about a third of the 53-song box) illuminate each other.

The portrait it sketches is of a lover who gets vindictive when his heart is broken, who seeks out confusion to try to confuse it right back and whose fascination with power relations leads him to religion, the one thing his restless, sarcastic eloquent mind finds greater than itself.

Download: "Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?," "Caribbean Wind"

**BOOTLEG SERIES VOLS. 1-3
(RARE & UNRELEASED)**

COLUMBIA, 1991

★★★★★



Three CDs of surplus bounty. The outtakes from his best records are fascinating examples of paths considered and abandoned (some talkin'

blues, a long poem without music, a fab Beatles imitation, a more meditative *Blood on the Tracks*). The '80s outtakes are so potent they suggest he'd been hiding the good stuff from fans.

Download: "If You Gotta Go, Go Now," "Blind Willie McTell"

**BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 4:
LIVE 1966—THE ROYAL
ALBERT HALL CONCERT**

COLUMBIA/LEGACY, 1998

★★★★★



Dylan's blisteringly loud 1966 tour of Britain with his first electric group was, by some accounts, total war between band and audience: An offended folkie

screamed "Judas!" at him during this London gig. Skip the first disc—the acoustic set Dylan plodded through to mollify his old constituency—but don't miss the second, where the plugged-in band comes out howling and slashing. The crowd isn't actually rioting, although they appreciate a good heckle.

Download: "Tell Me, Momma," "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues"

GREAT

GREATEST HITS, VOL. II

COLUMBIA, 1971

★★★★★



Dylan had released only four albums since the first *Greatest Hits*, so this eccentric but lovable double album covered his whole career.

Assembled like a farewell note from an inveterate rambler grown weary of expectations, it ends with the country-blues kiss-off "Down in the Flood"—one of six new songs, most of them familiar through other artists' covers, and two of which are about his writer's block.

Download: "I Shall Be Released," "When I Paint My Masterpiece"

HARD RAIN

COLUMBIA, 1976

★★★★★



The dark side of glam: a cruel, dramatic riposte to Lou Reed's *Rock 'n' Roll Animal*, recorded with an eight-piece band on the 1976 leg of the Rolling

Thunder Revue, and stuffed with big rock moves. (Start-stop flourishes! Twin guitar leads!) Dylan's estranged wife Sara was in the audience, and most of the album is an increasingly poisonous series of broken-relationship songs, culminating in 10 seething, purple-faced minutes of "Idiot Wind."

Download: "Idiot Wind," "You're a Big Girl Now"

GREATEST HITS, VOL. 3

COLUMBIA, 1994

★★★★★



No more than one song per album from a period five times as long as the era the first *Greatest Hits* covered, and calling most of these songs "hits" is

pushing it. Even so, it flows casually if loopily, salvaging a lot of articulate lyrics and a couple of bristling performances from Dylan's roughest patch. He comes off as a grumpy, rootless sentimentalist.

Download: "Dignity," "Series of Dreams"

GOOD

BOB DYLAN'S GREATEST HITS

COLUMBIA, 1967

★★★



Dylan's best-selling album was assembled from bits of his second through seventh records, plus the single "Positively 4th Street" (a venomous kiss-off

to the folk establishment), to keep the product flowing after a 1966 motorcycle accident. As a songbook, it's untouchable, but the sequence is jarringly random, and the repertoire is so familiar it's hard to hear one more time.

Download: "Positively 4th Street," "Blowin' in the Wind"

BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 5: LIVE 1975—THE ROLLING THUNDER REVUE

COLUMBIA/LEGACY, 2002

★★★



Rolling Thunder was a three-hour revue of Dylan's favorite folkies, rockers and poets; this 2-CD set of late-'75 performances trims it down to the star's

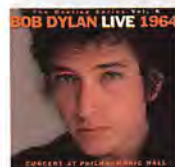
climactic, face-painted appearances. The cranked-up rock arrangements and the galloping marriage parable "Isis" are exhilarating, but four acoustic duets with Joan Baez deflate the album.

Download: "Isis," "Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You"

BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 6: LIVE 1964—CONCERT AT PHILHARMONIC HALL

COLUMBIA/LEGACY, 2004

★★★



A solo acoustic Halloween show, in front of an NYC crowd that knows all his words, nods in agreement with his political songs and cheers his duets

with the way-too-sincere Joan Baez as a reunion of their scene's King and Queen. As he unleashes the not-yet-recorded "It's Alright, Ma," you can hear him trying to provoke his admirers. A few months later, he'd give them an electric shock.

Download: "Mama, You Been on My Mind," "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)"

BE CAREFUL

BEFORE THE FLOOD

COLUMBIA, 1974

★★



Two words: *cocaine* and *beards*. Dylan's first official live album, backed up by the Band, who stomp all the intimacy out of the material to avoid

the risk of being boring. Dylan, meanwhile, has figured out that the more emphatically he yells his lyrics, the louder the crowd will cheer.

Download: "Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Mine)"

AT BUDOKAN

COLUMBIA, 1979

★★



Reportedly, Dylan wasn't crazy about releasing a third live album in five years, but he needed to raise alimony. For the first time, he sounds like an

oldies act, with a much-too-slick band (oy, those flute solos) repackaging his standards as reggae and quasi-disco.

Download: "Simple Twist of Fate"

REAL LIVE

COLUMBIA, 1984

★★



Dylan's 1984 live shows featured Mick Taylor (ex-Rolling Stones) on guitar as well as an intriguing new set of words for "Tangled Up in Blue." It's a pity the

rhythm section's so clay-footed, and Bob's voice has never been more nasal.

Download: "Masters of War"

THE ESSENTIAL BOB DYLAN

COLUMBIA, 2000

★★



If you're pretty sure Dylan was that guy who did "Stairway to Heaven," this chronological two-disc retrospective has lots of fine songs, but its order-

liness runs contrary to his spirit. Docked for redundancy. Docked more for being six songs shorter than the U.K. version.

Download: "Things Have Changed"

FOR FANS ONLY

DYLAN & THE DEAD

COLUMBIA, 1989

★



A late, soggy souvenir of a six-date 1987 tour with the Grateful Dead as his backup band. The big problem is that

challenge him: He sounds almost too bored to remember the words, and the aimless rhythms and yawnsome solos are the definition of bad Dead. The week of its release, Dylan appeared onstage with the Dead again, then asked if he could join them permanently. Wisely, they declined.

Download: "Queen Jane Approximately"

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT CELEBRATION

COLUMBIA, 1993

★



On this live tribute to Bob's three decades in showbiz, Lou Reed and Neil Young do their best, but all-stars like

Eddie Vedder and John Mellencamp throttle Dylan's oldies (three-quarters of them from the '60s) into humorless, overstuffed relics.

Download: Lou Reed, "Foot of Pride"

MTV UNPLUGGED

COLUMBIA, 1995

★



Dylan wanted to air the solo folk and blues material he'd lately been obsessed with, but instead was talked into bringing a band and making like a

living legend playing legendary classics in legendary fashion. Unfortunately, his legendary classics are clearly boring the living shit out of him; he messes with his enunciation and emphasis like a bad actor, trying to squeeze the last dab of meaning from these desiccated songs.

Download: "With God on Our Side"

FURTHER LISTENING

GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY: THE GOSPEL SONGS OF BOB DYLAN

COLUMBIA, 2003

★★

Having gospel stars cover Dylan's born-again repertoire is a great idea, defeated by gloopy production. But seek out Bob's rambunctious duet with Mavis Staples, "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking."

FURTHER READING

LIKE A ROLLING STONE: BOB DYLAN AT THE CROSSROADS

BY GREIL MARCUS (PUBLIC AFFAIRS)

★★★★

In an oblique history of the landmark song, its near-accidental recording and its aftershocks, Greil Marcus makes side trips to incorporate Son House's blues "My Black Mama," both Gulf Wars and even the Pet Shop Boys.

DYLAN'S VISIONS OF SIN

BY CHRISTOPHER RICKS (ECCO)

★★★★

British lit professor Ricks combs Dylan's lyrics, phoneme by phoneme, for commentary on sin and virtue. The scary part is that he finds it—although he doesn't argue that Dylan meant to put it there.



RANT MUSIC

A NEW YORK BAND IN LOVE WITH BARS, STEVIE NICKS AND TRUCKER SPEED CELEBRATE BAD BEHAVIOR

THE HOLD STEADY

**NORTH STAR BAR,
PHILADELPHIA,
PENNSYLVANIA**

MAY 26, 2005 ★★★★★

MINUTES INTO THE Hold Steady's set, singer Craig Finn has apparently lost it. He steps away from the mic at Philly's closet-sized North Star Bar, eyes vacant, mouth twitching as if he's praying furiously, clapping his hands in random bursts. The music—arena rock bursting from a bar band—resounds all around him, but the stocky, bespectacled frontman is seemingly oblivious.

Then his brief communion with the infinite suddenly ends, and he's back to his booming sing-speak about dating some couch-surfing druggie chick. But the small crowd, a transfixed khaki-clad jock in particular, is still teetering on the edge of that void—and ecstatic to be there.

Welcome to the Hold Steady's tiny but growing world, where songs centering on depravity and

redemption jolt mild-mannered Bruce Springsteen fans and cultish indie troupes alike. Finn's last band, Minneapolis's Lifter Puller, pretty much defined the latter. With the Hold Steady—which he formed with former Lifter Puller guitarist Tad Kubler and three others after moving to Brooklyn in 2000—Finn embraces the everyguy storytelling-rock practiced by Neil Young and Billy Joel: a little pompous and unruly, but easy to identify with—and a plain powerhouse in the riffs and

Finn spouts the best lyrics outside of hip-hop, and his delivery is arresting. During the verses, he sounds as if he's swallowed a loudspeaker; the choruses dare everyone to rant along. During "Barfruit Blues," he sassily squeaks a female character's line—"It's good to see you back in a bar band, baby"—then honks the comeback: "It's great to see you're still in the bars!"

"You ever heard the one about Rod Stewart blowing his entire band?" Finn asks a bit

behaved way better since I've been in New York," which would reduce the amount of trucker-speed-snorting that transpires in his songs.

While no Rod Stewart, Finn and his bandmates aren't Led Zeppelin either. At one point, Kubler swings his guitar around his body, mid-screaming-solo, but it feels almost parodic, as does Finn's banter about scoring anti-menstrual-cramp prescriptions to get high. Dressed in unassuming thrift-store dress shirts—bassist Galen Polivka is wearing pink corduroys, and keyboardist Franz Nicolay has a tiny handlebar mustache—the band come off as approachable, even a little square. And Finn, a churchgoing guy, has recently infused his tales of depravity with references to a kind of Catholic redemption.

The Hold Steady's stories of disaffected scenesters have started to catch on with older, unaffiliated rock fans. "I have people come up to me and say, 'I haven't gone to a concert in two years, but I heard your record, and I really love you guys,'" Finn tells *Blender*. You can hear that gratitude during the spiritual-hangover lament "Killer Parties," when the crowd erupts at the line, "Philly is full of friendly friends that will love you like a brother." Tonight, Craig Finn is splicing on behalf of neglected rock fans everywhere. **NICK CATUCCI**

VERY LOUD TALES OF DEPRAVITY AND REDEMPTION.

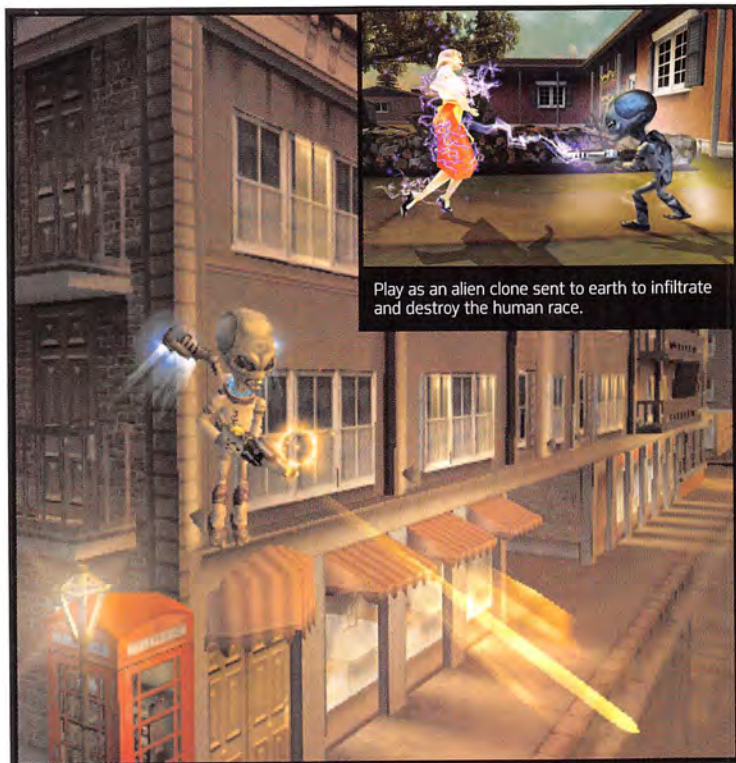
rhythms department.

When the band light into "The Swish"—off their first disc, 2004's *Almost Killed Me*—only one adjective comes to mind: *loud*. Unfortunately, you can hardly make out Finn's hollering. Chords surge and notes cascade from his and Kubler's guitars as drummer Bobby Drake, who probably pounded railroad ties in a past life, batters it all home.

later, as a prelude to a rollicking rendition of the Stewart-referencing piano jam "Stevie Nix," off *Separation Sunday*, released this past spring. "We'd like a rock myth made up about us." Mythologizing the ordinary—namely, Midwestern rock fans who party too hard—is Finn's specialty. Asked after the show if he'll ever get around to depicting life in Brooklyn, all Finn will say is, "I've

GUEST LIST

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HOT SUMMER BEVERAGE

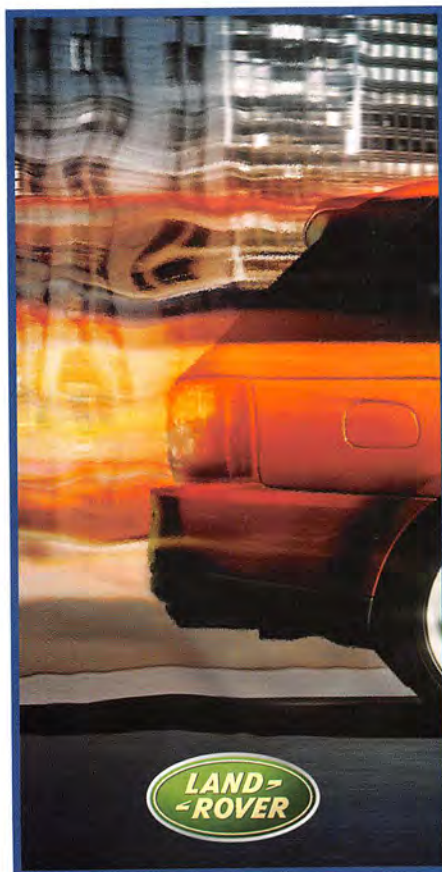
IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD, the hottest drink this summer is beer remixed. That's right! The innovators at Anheuser-Busch have launched a new drink called B⁶, beer infused with caffeine, guarana and ginseng. This fabulous new beverage, with hints of raspberry and cherry, is sweet and tart and bound to make your night "go longer." Ask for B⁶ at your favorite nightly hotspot.



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Why you shouldn't pick up hitchhikers: Exhibits A, B and C.



ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS

Trading strip-club anthems for slasher-flick glory, Rob Zombie follows his controversial directorial debut with an even more disturbing sequel **BY CLARK COLLIS**

"YOU GO SEE any giant Hollywood action movie, they just randomly kill people and it's a big blast," says horror rocker turned horror-film auteur Rob Zombie. "But in this movie, you kill one person and the whole audience is like, 'This is fucking horrible.'"

The movie in question is *The Devil's Rejects*, a sequel to Zombie's 2003 directorial debut, *House of 1,000 Corpses*. That film introduced us to the Fireflies, a clan of backwoods mass-murderers cut from the same viscera-encrusted cloth as the family from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. *Corpses* was actually finished in 2000, but Universal declined to release it after Connecticut senator Joe Lieberman led a post-Columbine congressional attack against what he described as Hollywood's habit of "marketing mass murder." But Zombie had the last laugh—*Corpses* was finally distributed by Lions Gate, earned \$13 million at

the box office, and then sold around a million copies on DVD.

Despite admitting that he had to edit the movie down quite a bit to get an R rating for *Rejects*, Zombie is not expecting a repeat of the controversy. "Hopefully, people in Washington have got better things to worry about than this," says the surprisingly soft-

spoken 40-year-old. "I would think that they do."

The irony is that *The Devil's Rejects* is not just a more brutal exercise than its gore-drenched predecessor but, in many ways, a more troubling one. As the film opens, the Fireflies find their country compound surrounded by cops led by William Forsythe, who

declares his intention of administering to the family a "100% Alabama ass-whipping." But once the gunsmoke clears, their asses remain largely un-whipped. Forsythe succeeds in capturing family matriarch Mother Firefly (Leslie Easterbrook), although her daughter Vera-Ellen (played by Mrs. Zombie, Sheri Moon) escapes with stone-cold psycho Otis B. Driftwood (Bill Moseley). After butchering a nurse and stealing her car, the pair head off to a desert motel, where they torture and kill a country band led by Geoffrey Lewis and porn icon Ginger Lynn Allen while awaiting the arrival of another Firefly posse member, demented clown Captain Spaulding (Sid Haig).

So far, so gory. More visually deft than its predecessor, *Rejects* also finds Zombie using every trick at his disposal to evoke the '70s horror movies he loves, from dramatic freeze-frames to a cast boasting an A to Z of genre char-

ROGUES GALLERY

ROB ZOMBIE NAME-CHECKS HIS FAVORITE MOVIE SOCIOPATHS OF ALL TIME

TRAVIS BICKLE
(ROBERT DE NIRO) IN *TAXI DRIVER*

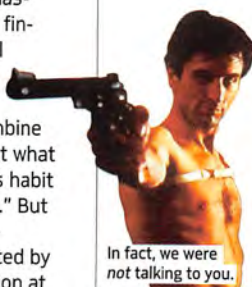
"What is Travis Bickle? You don't know where this guy stands. He survives at the end, but he kills a lot of people; he's a nut. He's a loose cannon masquerading as a hero."

THE HITCHHIKER
(EDWIN NEAL) IN *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*

"He's so convincing. There's no better moment than when you can go, 'Is that an actor? Or is that a real fucking nutcase they got to be in this movie?'"

ALEX
(MALCOLM MCDOWELL) IN *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*

"I don't really think of him as a villain—even though he clearly is. He's so charismatic, and he's so funny, you kind of forget how horrible a person he really is."



In fact, we were not talking to you.



Director Zombie, explaining why he needs a wallet chain.

acter actors. But then Zombie pulls an audacious switch by having cop Forsythe pursue this gang of killers and sexual abusers with such outside-the-law violence that the Fireflies actually become the film's heroes. That, at least, is *Blender's* conclusion, if not necessarily Zombie's.

"I definitely leave it up to the viewer," argues the dreadlocked director. "The type of movies that I've always enjoyed are the ones where you can walk out of the theater and argue on the way home. I don't ever say anything, really."

But the truth is that Zombie, as auteur, says a lot—but whether it's what he *intends* to say is another matter. In the film's climactic sequence, for example, he cuts repeatedly from lovingly constructed shots of the blood-spattered Fireflies cruising towards their final showdown with the cops to sepia-toned footage of the crew in happier times—all as "Freebird" rousing blasts away on the soundtrack. There is little doubt that we are now supposed to be rooting for these maniacs. Indeed, when *Blender* presses the director on the subject, the usually eloquent Zombie starts struggling for words.

"Yeah, I mean, at the end ..." he begins. "It was just ... you know ... it was ... it really was, sort of, I had to give them a send-off, mostly because anything else would have been disappointing."

So there you have it. Although currently touring with Ozzfest, Zombie says that he plans to hang up his "rock boots" to concentrate on filmmaking. His proposed next project—"think *Taxi Driver* by way of *Ghost World*"—sounds intriguing enough, but *The Devil's Rejects* is plain disgusting—in all the right ways, and in a few of the wrong ones too.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best movies of the past months



HUSTLE & FLOW

Pimpin', ho-in' and rappin' made not-so-easy.



CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Sweet! Johnny Depp stars in diabetic-taunting remake.

LAST GOOD MOVIE YOU SAW?



DAVE NAVARRO GUITARIST, JANE'S ADDICTION

"Monster. Charlize Theron was amazing. It wasn't pretty, and I liked that."

THE BLENDER-O-METER

HOW EXCITED ARE WE ABOUT THIS MONTH'S BIG-SCREEN OFFERINGS? HEY, LET'S SEE!



THE ISLAND

Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson discover that they are clones in this sci-fi thriller. Looks promising, although word has it that director Michael "let's blow stuff up" Bay blows up less stuff than usual.



THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Arduous shoot: check. Delayed release: check. Yep, it's a new Terry Gilliam movie! His latest offbeat opus stars Matt Damon and Heath Ledger as con artists who make money protecting people from imaginary curses.



FOUR BROTHERS

A quartet of two white and two black brothers—it's an adoption thang—investigate the murder of the woman who raised them. *Boyz n the Hood* auteur John Singleton directs a cast headed by Mark Wahlberg and Andre Benjamin.



NIGHT WATCH

A huge box-office hit in its native Russia, this is the first part of a promised trilogy. But all you really need to know is that vampires, spider dolls and supernatural abortions are utilized to awesomely creepy effect.



SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE

To finance his sister's kidney operation, a deaf-and-dumb Korean holds the daughter of a local businessman for ransom. Predictably, things go awry, although you'll be amazed at quite how awry in this stylish thriller from the director of *Oldboy*.



BROKEN FLOWERS

Aging ladies' man Bill Murray attempts to find out which one of four women—Sharon Stone, Frances Conroy, Jessica Lange or Tilda Swinton—he may have impregnated 20 years earlier, in the dolefully brilliant latest from Jim Jarmusch.



VALIANT

The disease-carrying winged vermin known as pigeons get a CGI makeover from the producers of *Shrek* in this tale of one Ewan McGregor-voiced bird and his attempts to become a British war hero during WWII.



DEUCE BIGALOW: EUROPEAN GIGOLO

You've probably already figured out that this sequel finds Rob Schneider's man-whore traveling abroad. But did you know that he battles the powerful "European Union of Prosti-dudes"? Now you do.

VERY EXCITED

EXCITED-ISH

NOT SO MUCH



Cowgirl Alba eyes the luckiest calf ever.

BLOODY GOOD

Robert Rodriguez's slavishly faithful adaptation of Frank Miller's hard-boiled *Sin City* comic books—er, *graphic novels*—is black and white and red all over **BY CLARK COLLIS**

SIN CITY

DIMENSION HOME VIDEO

★★★★

TORTURE. SEXUAL MOLESTATION. Castration. *More* castration. Routinely unpleasant are the destinies that await the corrupt cops,

vengeance-fueled lugs and gun-toting hookers who populate comic-book legend Frank Miller's *Sin City* books. But a worse fate than any, at least for fans of Miller's noir-drenched graphic novels, would have been for these larger-than-life characters to be turned into watered-down imita-

tions of themselves by some rent-a-hack Hollywood director.

That they were spared this is thanks to absurdly prolific Tex-Mex auteur and comics nut Robert Rodriguez, whose string of hits (the *Spy Kids* franchise, *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*) and personal studio complex in Austin have put him in a position to do pretty much whatever he wants. Which is how he was able to bring three of Miller's seven *Sin City* books to the big screen in as faithful a manner as possible and, just in case he was ever tempted to deviate from the path of righteousness, get Miller himself to co-direct.

True, this move resulted in Rodriguez's resigning from the infamously strident Directors Guild of America, but it also resulted in a film in which almost every Miller brushstroke, broken heart and unspeakably violent plot twist is reproduced to dazzling effect.

Gasp at the tawdry hotness of a fishnet-clad Rosario Dawson! Ask, "Hey, isn't that Mickey Rourke under all that makeup?" as Rourke's Marv, less a character than a force of nature, seeks his revenge on a cannibal serial killer! Geek out on the DVD's commentary and storyboards, or buy it for your PSP! (Or don't—Rodriguez says another version featuring longer, stand-alone versions of the film's presently interlocking tales should be available by year's end.) Whatever you do, there's no doubt that *Sin City*, unlike many of its characters, has balls.



DIRECTOR'S CUT

COWBOY-HAT-LOVIN' DIRECTOR **ROBERT RODRIGUEZ** SPILLS HIS GUTS ABOUT MAKING *SIN CITY*

WAS THERE A POINT WHEN YOU WERE MAKING *SIN CITY* THAT YOU THOUGHT, "HEY, MAYBE WE DON'T NEED ALL THESE CASTRATION SCENES"?

"Well, that's the way it was in the books. But Frank never put three stories together, that was my thing. And what you end up with is—ha ha ha!—several castration scenes. Because each story has at least one. The castrated 'material' is just a foam-rubber piece with fluorescent paint on it. There really isn't, like, a dick there or anything."

WAS IT DISTRACTING TO DIRECT SO MANY SCANTILY CLAD WOMEN?

"Easiest job in the world. They're beautiful right out of the box and then, when you dress them up like that, it's like, OH MY GOD! But after that, it becomes work."

SINCE THIS CAME OUT, YOU ALSO DID A 3-D CHILDREN'S MOVIE. ANY TIME FOR *SIN CITY* 2?

"Yeah, we'll probably shoot it next January. Some of the characters from the first movie will be back, because they show up in the other



Clive Owen: Still not the new James Bond.

books. Mickey will be back! But there might be one more sneaky movie snuck in between."

YOU NEVER SLEEP, DO YOU?

"I don't. I was about to take a nap and I had to do this interview!"

CLARK COLLIS

BILL & TED'S MOST EXCELLENT COLLECTION

MGM/UA

★★★★

FREAKED

ANCHOR BAY

★★★★

It's easy to dismiss the Bill & Ted movies as stupidity incarnate thanks to the semi-vegetative state of Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter's lead characters. But how many supposedly smarter comedies have lampooned Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* as Bill & Ted's *Bogus Journey* did? Like, totally none, dude! This collection boasts both B&T movies, plus a "Most Triumphant Making-of" doc and comic book. Just as entertaining is 1993's *Freaked*, which Winter co-directed and stars in as the spokesman for a chemical company who unwillingly becomes one of the chief attractions in a South American freak show. What a plot! And what a cast, with Keanu cameo-ing as Ortiz the Dog-Boy, while Mr T. essays, obviously, the bearded lady.

THE JACKET

WARNER BROS.

★★★

Amnesia-stricken Desert Storm veteran Adrien Brody is put in a straitjacket for possibly killing a cop, and then pumped full of drugs by shrink Kris Kristofferson, whereupon he travels into the future. Is Brody plum crazy? Did he actually die back in Iraq? Or is he really doing the horizontal limbo with depressed goth Keira Knightley several years hence? Anyone who likes definitive answers will be disappointed by *The Jacket*, but anyone who likes a dose of romance in their war trauma/drug hallucination/science fiction/nut-hatch movies won't be.

THE JERK

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★

"I was born a poor black child..." Steve Martin's first proper film remains his best. True, this tale of a hapless idiot's rise and fall may be just an excuse to string together a bunch of jokes, but for once the jokes are so good you just don't care. This special edition, which includes the "lost film strips" of the movie's cat-juggling-obsessed priest Father Carlos Las Vegas de Cordova, is released to commemorate that jerkiest of anniversaries: the 26th. To celebrate, we're picking out a thermos for you.

Bloc Party: Also fun in alleys.



MOVING PICTURES

THIS MONTH, **BLOC PARTY** REVEAL WHICH MOVIE ALLEVIATES THEIR TOUR-BUS TEDIUM

PURPLE RAIN

"We've been watching this on repeat—it's the most grandiose, extravagant rock film ever. We have all been seduced by Prince's wooden yet intense acting, and the stellar live performances. He is a real musical genius. A true inspiration."

RACE WITH THE DEVIL

ANCHOR BAY

☆☆☆

The '70s horror movie meets the '70s conspiracy movie in this soon-to-be-remade 1975 tale of tourists who accidentally witness an occult human sacrifice. They report it to the local police chief but he, naturally, doubts their story. Hey, maybe the cop's one of the satanists ... for that matter, maybe *everyone* is! An underrated creep-out with a rare lead performance from cult movie icon Warren Oates, the extras on this DVD also include a featurette with his co-star, stoner-hippie legend Peter Fonda.

D.E.B.S.

SONY

☆☆

With its plot about hot teen spies in Catholic-school skirts, *D.E.B.S.* sounds more like a cheapo porn flick than an action comedy. But then it would have better dialogue, better acting and fewer periods in its irritating title. For the record, Jordana Brewster plays a lesbian supervillainess, while Sara Foster is a spyette who, in one of the film's rare good jokes, is taking a course in "Gender Reconstruction and the Criminal Mastermind."

GUNNER PALACE

PALM PICTURES

☆☆☆☆

Essential viewing regardless of your politics, this documentary highlights both the bravery of the troops in Iraq and the often futile nature of their mission. Focusing on the 400 U.S. soldiers stationed in Uday Hussein's bombed-out palace, the film spotlights a varied cast of rappers, guitar shredders and grunt-philosophers as they struggle through a situation that is far from being "mission accomplished."

COACH CARTER

PARAMOUNT

☆☆☆

Based on a true story, Samuel L. Jackson's titular coach whips a team of inner-city high school no-hopers into shape through discipline, class attendance and shouting. Jackson is hugely watchable, but the film itself suffers frequent slow spots. The DVD includes a fascinating doc about the real-life Carter, who turns out to be every bit as hard-assed, if more soft-spoken, as Jackson's depiction of him.

MUSIC DVDS

And this is after the coke kicks in.



SLOW DEATH

Everyone's favorite regular-guy rockers star in their first regular-guy rock documentary BY LAUREN HARRIS

DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE DRIVE WELL, SLEEP CAREFULLY

PLEXIFILM

☆☆☆

"This is simply the story of a band on the road," reads the opening crawl of newly minted indie-darlings-gone-mass Death Cab for Cutie's first documentary, and it's no understatement. A far cry from *Cocksucker Blues*, *Dig!* and other notorious bands-on-the-run docs, this film reveals the Bellingham, Washington, quartet to be harmless dweebs, flying kites and referencing *The Legend of Zelda* and *The Lord of the Rings* rather than swaddling themselves with groupies and narcotics. That's not to say the band isn't without its quirks—like football players studying

game film, band members meticulously watch footage of their shows to find ways to improve. Interspersed with live performances from their 2004 tour following the breakthrough album *Transatlanticism*, band interview topics include, not surprisingly, achieving mainstream success via *The O.C.* fandom and, slightly more surprisingly, jamming with John McEnroe.



Not pictured: drummer, Seth Cohen.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best DVDs of the past months



A DIRTY SHAME

NEW LINE

Vaginal foliage. Adult babies. Dirt-lickers. This is why John Waters gets paid the small-to-medium bucks!



POINT BLANK

WARNER BROS.

You don't want to make Lee Marvin angry—although everyone does in this classic 1967 thriller.

THE BEST OF THE REST

T. REX: BORN TO BOOGIE

(SANCTUARY) ☆☆☆ We're not saying drugs were involved in this entertainingly gonzo 1972 showcase for glam-rocker Marc Bolan, which mixes concert footage with Fellini-inspired fantasy sequences. But it would explain the car-mirror-eating dwarf—and the decision to let Ringo Starr direct. **THE PRE-TENDERS GREATEST HITS** (RHINO HOME VIDEO) ☆☆☆

"We made two of the worst videos ever," says the brutally frank Chrissie Hynde of her Pretenders, but her count may be on the low side. The sweeping documentary and New Wave pop hits salvage the high-concept, low-quality video clips. **THE DICK CAVETT SHOW: ROCK ICONS** (SHOUT! FACTORY) ☆☆☆ Ultimate square Dick Cavett shares brief stories behind these

shows featuring icons like dapper David Bowie (with Luther Vandross singing backup) and Jefferson Airplane, still strung out from Woodstock. **MCS: KICK OUT THE JAMS** (MVD) ☆☆☆ Militant Detroit punk-rock forefathers are captured here in live, sloppily filmed glory. Low quality, sure, but it's about the best you'll ever see of the short-lived, seldom-filmed quintet.

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SHARK TALE

Humans: It's what's for dinner. BY LIBE GOAD

JAWS UNLEASHED

MAJESCO, PS2, XBOX, PC

★★★★

JUST WHEN YOU thought it was safe to spend countless hours vegetating on the couch, the videogame adaptation of the original summer blockbuster brings it all back home—the great white with a monster appetite, dimwitted Amity locals and Richard Dreyfuss in a wool beanie. Unlike the 1986 *Jaws* NES game, which centered on hunting down the toothy menace, this game is played from the other point of view.

The story, such as it is, takes place 30 years after the Spielberg classic. The first few missions start off easy: Gobble a few lesser sharks, attack divers and break into suppos- edly shark-proof facilities.

Eventually the wily fish faces off against gigantor enemies (hel-lo, Orca!) and mega-fortified boats carrying delicious humans. When the story grows tiresome—and it does—there's always gory mayhem to keep things entertaining. Try testing the bounds of the game's "dismemberment engine," which boasts 25 levels of violent limb-removal.

But the modern shark-about-town can't rely on incisors alone—side missions require varying levels of stealth and speed as well as a healthy appetite for destruction. The death aquatic will appeal to the Steve Zissou in everyone, as will the return of the overly familiar but still deeply disturbing "dun-dun" theme song. To clumsily paraphrase Roy Scheider's police chief Brody, you're gonna need a bigger TV.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best releases of the past months



LUMINES

UBISOFT, PSP

If *Tetris* was like chewing on poppy leaves, then this puzzle game is like shooting black-tar heroin.



DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

THQ, PS2

These retro, brain-sucking aliens will make you Klaatu in your Barada Nikto.

THE GUIDE GAMES



MADDEN NFL '06

EA SPORTS, PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

★★★★

For everyone worried that EA's exclusive NFL deal meant the Madden franchise would get soft in the middle, fear not. Emulate the lifestyles of the rich, brawny and famous with the Superstar mode—endorsement deals included. The emphasis on accuracy may put a damper on run-and-gun games, but the attention to detail makes this as close to real as any couch jockey's gonna get. Until *Madden '07*, anyway.



THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

VU GAMES, PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

★★★

Sometimes it's fun to mess stuff up. That's the name of the game in this new Hulk title, based on the comic, not the movie. The big green lug with a heart of gold can leap miles into the air or demolish everything in his path. Marvel geeks will quiver at the sight of obscure guest villains. Don't expect any sad, walking-away piano music here—this action-packed Hulk could eat Lou Ferrigno for lunch.



SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALs

SCEA, PS2

★★★★

Everyone loves a good terrorist hunt. Good thing, too, since the third iteration of SCEA's *SEALs* game takes heavily armed soldiers through Poland, Morocco and Bangladesh, searching for tangos under every rock. Twenty vehicles have been added to the mix—Humvees, SOC assault boats, T-72 tanks and more—all decked out with heavy artillery, turning this battle into a cross-country tour de morte.



187: RIDE OR DIE

UBISOFT, XBOX, PC

★★★

Pointless controversy alert: 187's violent storyline makes it a surefire target for conservative blowhards everywhere. Voice acting by Larenz (Menace II Society) Tate and an original soundtrack by rapper Guerilla Black lend street cred. But the game-play, desperate to ride *Grand Theft Auto*'s blood-soaked coattails, feels more like a never-ending road trip than a trigger-happy romp through urban America.

JOYSTICK JAMS

THIS MONTH, WE ASK **JURASSIC 5** ABOUT "CLOBBERIN' TIME," THEIR SMASHING CONTRIBUTION TO ACTIVISION'S NEW **FANTASTIC FOUR** GAME



Jurassic ... uh ... 6?

MC CHALI 2NA SAYS:

"[Jurassic 5 DJ] Nu-Mark and I are huge comic book fans; we wrote and recorded the song in seven hours. The beat is supposed to emulate the sound of property being destroyed."

BLENDER SAYS:

Mission accomplished. J5's catchy tune, which provides the theme music for girly *FF* member the Thing's carnage, inaugurates a new genre: comic book crunk. GABE SORIA

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Sexual Themes
Violence



PlayStation 2



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WIN THIS THINGY

Not only will this month's lucky correct crossword-puzzle-answerer get a Dell (dude!) 700m laptop, it'll come fully loaded with a year's subscription to Rhapsody's music service. If we were smart, we'd keep the thing ourselves.



PENCIL ME IN

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword! Starring 26 across!

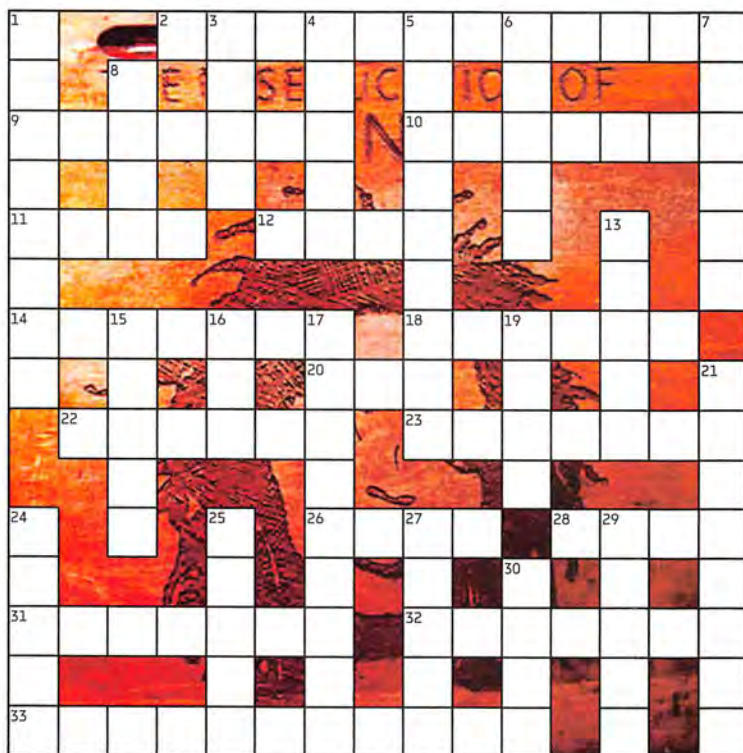
BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 2 "American Baby" daddy
- 9 Velvet Revolver's trigger man
- 10 Emo rockers My Chemical _____
- 11 Rock's life partner
- 12 Black-eyed rappers?
- 14 Nas's alter-ego surname, also that of drug dealer Pablo
- 18 Simon Cowell-created neo-classical quartet with the hit cover "Unbreak My Heart" (two words)
- 20 Bob Dylan's Grammy-hogging comeback *Time _____ of Mind*
- 22 Shimmering guitar effect
- 23 First 50 Cent/The Game hit (three words)
- 26 Ex-Fugee who had a popular miseducation
- 28 Billy Corgan's current tonsorial status
- 31 California town where No Doubt are from
- 32 1982 Pink Floyd movie
- 33 The Boss, formally

DOWN

- 1 '80s New Wave band featured in *24 Hour Party People*
- 3 C&W's Jackson
- 4 Vedder or Van Halen
- 5 Boston band inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2001
- 6 The Who rock opera about a deaf, dumb and blind kid
- 7 Mrs. Federline's maiden name
- 8 The Replacements' college-rock anthem "Left of the _____"
- 13 "When the _____ Breaks" (Led Zep)
- 15 Eric Clapton's '60s outfit
- 16 One-third of a 2000 'N Sync hit
- 17 Matchbox twenty's front guy, lonely no more
- 19 Armenian weirdos System of a _____
- 21 Brit rockers who go at the speed of sound
- 24 Biggie Smalls' widow Faith
- 25 They will, they will rock you
- 27 Pink says, "Don't _____ Get Me"
- 29 Ryan ... or Bryan
- 30 Lennon's youngest son



→ Send your completed puzzle to *Blender* Puzzle Contest, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, NY 10018



ROUND 5 DEATH CAB VS. BLENDER

POP STARS aren't known as cerebral types, so *Blender* challenged the whole lot of 'em to a game of chess, hoping for an easy, ego-boosting victory. Each month, a different star will make a move, and we'll respond until we finally capture that crowny-looking doodad. **Nick Harmer**, bassist for poindexter rockers **DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE**, mans the board this month. Don't look so surprised.

NICK'S MOVE

"QUEEN TO G2."

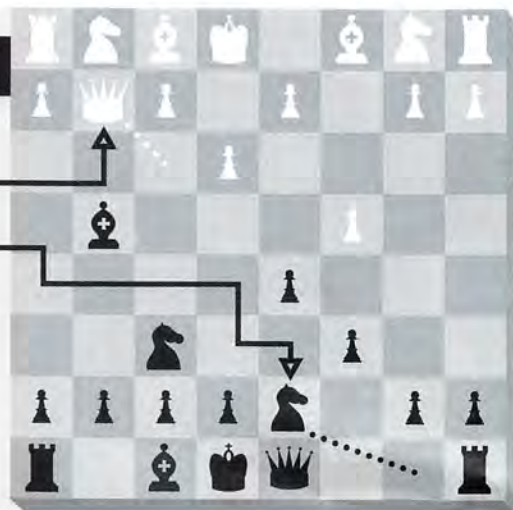
BLENDER'S MOVE

"KNIGHT TO D7."

Former U.S. Chess Federation president **Don Schultz** says:

"Right now, *Blender* has the better game, but pawn to e5 would have been better, to open up their king bishop. The pop stars should take advantage of *Blender's* cramped kingside."

COME BACK NEXT MONTH AS THE **EGGHEAD SMACKDOWN** CONTINUES!



A spread from *Playgirl*'s worst-selling issue.



INEXPERIENCED

An intimate new Hendrix bio reconfirms the guitar god's legend, but never quite explains how he achieved it. BY SEAN HOWE

ROOM FULL OF MIRRORS: A JIMI HENDRIX BIOGRAPHY

By Charles R. Cross

☆☆☆ HYPERION, \$25

"I HAVE ALWAYS sensed Hendrix looming as a subject to be faced one day," writes chronicler of dead Seattle rock icons Charles R. Cross (*Heavier Than Heaven: A Biography of Kurt Cobain*), "as an aspiring actor knows that Shakespeare's canon awaits." Looks as if it's the Voodoo-Chileas-Forrest-Gump mythology that calls Cross like a siren.

So it's reasonable to assume then that a biographer of Cross's stature would shed some light on exactly *how* Hendrix was able to leap from the chitlin circuit, where he played with Otis Redding and Little Richard, to swinging London, where his model-bedding rivals included Jagger and Richards. No such luck. Previously unpublished correspondence shows him to be a purveyor of prose both purple and hazy—an image completely at odds with the intelligence, sexiness and ferocity of the gum-

chewing badass captured in *Monterey Pop*. Cross doesn't mediate and, perhaps unwittingly, allows his subject to register as little more than a counter-culture-touring noble savant who bought a lucky ticket in the empty-vessel sweepstakes. In a library filled with lilting insight (David Henderson's *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky*) and encyclopedic devotion (Harry Shapiro's *Electric Gypsy*), the chief gimmick of *Room Full of Mirrors* seems to be its ability to reflect away from Hendrix himself at every turn.



CBGB & OMFUG:

THIRTY YEARS FROM THE HOME OF UNDERGROUND ROCK

Foreword by Hilly Kristal, afterword by David Byrne

☆☆☆☆ ABRAMS, \$25

With the seminal New York punk club CBGB in imminent danger of closing, the timing's perfect for this look back at the legends and the also-rans who graced the graffiti-laden dive's cramped stage. Featuring essays from the club's founder (Kristal) and one of its biggest success stories (Byrne) and sprinkled with hazy remembrances from artists and patrons alike, the archival photos are so vivid you can smell the urine. STEVE KANDELL



DEF JAM, INC.

By Stacy Gueraseva

☆☆☆ ONE WORLD/BALLANTINE, \$24

A history of Def Jam Records is a history of hip-hop's ascendance from inner-city curiosity to corporate juggernaut, writ small.

Started by überproducer Rick Rubin in his NYU dorm room in 1982, the label's rags-to-immense-riches story is crammed with interviews from key players. A former employee of co-founder Russell Simmons, Gueraseva is less interested in authorial objectivity than in reaffirming Def Jam's status as the once and future kings of the industry. STEVE KANDELL



BLENDER APPROVED

The best books of the past months



TURN THE BEAT AROUND: THE SECRET HISTORY OF DISCO

By Peter Shapiro
FABER & FABER, \$26

Some very smart writing about some very silly dance music.



INNOCENT WHEN YOU DREAM: THE TOM WAITS READER

Edited by Mac Montandon
THUNDER'S MOUTH PRESS, \$17

The ever-quotable barroom bard, with a foreword by Frank Black.

HEY, ROCK STARS CAN READ!

BOOKS, EVEN! FOR INSTANCE ...

Billy Idol:
Crouching
uncomfortably
with himself.



BILLY IDOL

THE THIRD MAN, By Rob White
BFI FILM CLASSICS

"The book's about Carol Reed directing *The Third Man*, and it accesses a million different influences, both literary and cinematic. Quoting Albert Camus, from 'The Myth of Sisyphus': 'There is no sun without shadow, and it is necessary to know the night.'"

THE 28-YEAR-OLD VIRGINIA-BORN TRUCKER-CAP ENTHUSIAST ADMITS TO LOVING CIGARETTES AND SEXUALLY MOLESTING PEOPLE IN HIS SLEEP. WHICH COMES DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO ANSWERING THE QUESTION ...

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY F. SCOTT SCHAFER

WHO DOES JASON MRAZ THINK HE IS?

WHY'D YOU DRAW A SNOWMAN FOR YOUR SELF-PORTRAIT?

When I sign autographs, I draw a snowman and write a little note: "Be cool, like the snowman." Here, he's on roller skates, because I'm a bit of a roller-rink wizard. He's toting a ghetto blaster, because ghetto blasters are cool. Also, he's holding a cigarette. Cigarettes are very unpopular. I mean, even child molesters are against smoking.

ROCK STARS NEED CAUSES: BONO HAS AFRICAN DEBT RELIEF, CHRIS MARTIN HAS FAIR TRADE ...

And I'm trying to bring back smoking! Not really. I'm just saying, get off my back. If someone tells me not to, it makes me want to have another one. My girlfriend hates it, she won't kiss me. I actually quit for four weeks.

WHY DID YOU START SMOKING AGAIN?

Panic attacks. Bad attitude. Smoking is meditative: You do some deep breathing, gather your composure. It keeps me at ease and productive and creative. I believe cigarettes are packed with vitamins and minerals.

THAT MUST BE WHY SMOKERS LIVE SO MUCH LONGER. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CURSE WORD?

These guys I know in Minneapolis, I heard one of them call the other a "fucktard." It's retard, with fuck on the front of it. That's probably one of the worst things you could ever be called. I've never actually used it myself. I'm a huge fan of "son of a bitch." It just has a nice ring to it.

WHAT MEDICATION ARE YOU ON?

None. I do take a shitload of vitamins. But I have this sleep sex disorder. Have you heard of this? It's ridiculous: I wake up at four or five in the morning and I'm making out with my girlfriend, or I wake up in the middle of sex. While sleeping, my hand will just wander.

YOU COP FEELS WHILE YOU'RE ASLEEP?

And it freaks me out. My roommate Dennis, we've had to share a bed on a number of occasions while traveling. One morning, I woke up and I'd had this dream that I copped a feel on Dennis, stuck a hand down the back of his boxer shorts and grabbed his hairy ass. When I woke up, I didn't know whether to tell him about the dream. Then he came out of the bathroom laughing: "Do you know what you did last night?" He and I don't share a bed anymore.

WHAT WOULD YOUR EX-GIRLFRIENDS SAY ABOUT YOU?

The last thing my ex-girlfriend told me was in a text message: "You're rude." Which is quite sad. When I get into a relationship, I'm all in. Like, this is the *one*. Like, this girl I'm with now? I'm going to marry her. But [laughs] I said that about the last one as well. I send 50,000 text messages, e-mail, flowers. But the day I don't love her anymore, I am going to tell her. And most of them are crushed by that.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF PHYSICALLY.

Skinny at times, but fat full of rhymes.

WERE KIDS MEAN TO YOU IN HIGH SCHOOL?

Yeah. I grew up in Mechanicsville, Virginia, and once a week I'd hear "faggot" in the cafeteria. It could have been drama class, could have been the patent-leather shoes. It confused me, because I was hanging out with the hottest girls. I went to cheerleading camp: 400 hot girls doing splits, wearing skirts, only three guys. And one guy was deaf!

MAYBE YOUR CLASSMATES WERE JEALOUS OF THE SHOES.

They just didn't understand me. This girl who was one of my best friends in high school invited me over to watch TV and the next thing I know her college boyfriend kicks down the door and says, "You're dead." He beat my ass all the way out the door.

YOU LIKE TO RAP. YOU DO KNOW YOU'RE WHITE, RIGHT?

Yeah, I heard about that. I'm OK with it. My mom and dad are white—that's one of the big reasons why I'm white. I like the hip-hop. A buddy and I want to start a rap duo. Maybe we'll call ourselves the Fucktards.

ARE YOU A GOOD BOY OR A BAD BOY?

I'm a good boy.

BUT YOU'RE A CIGARETTE-SMOKING, CURSING ...

... Horrible ex-boyfriend who molests other boys in their sleep. But I wear the good-boy mask. Deep inside, I'm a selfish, dirty shit. Deep inside, I'm ice cold. Like that snowman. [BLENDER]

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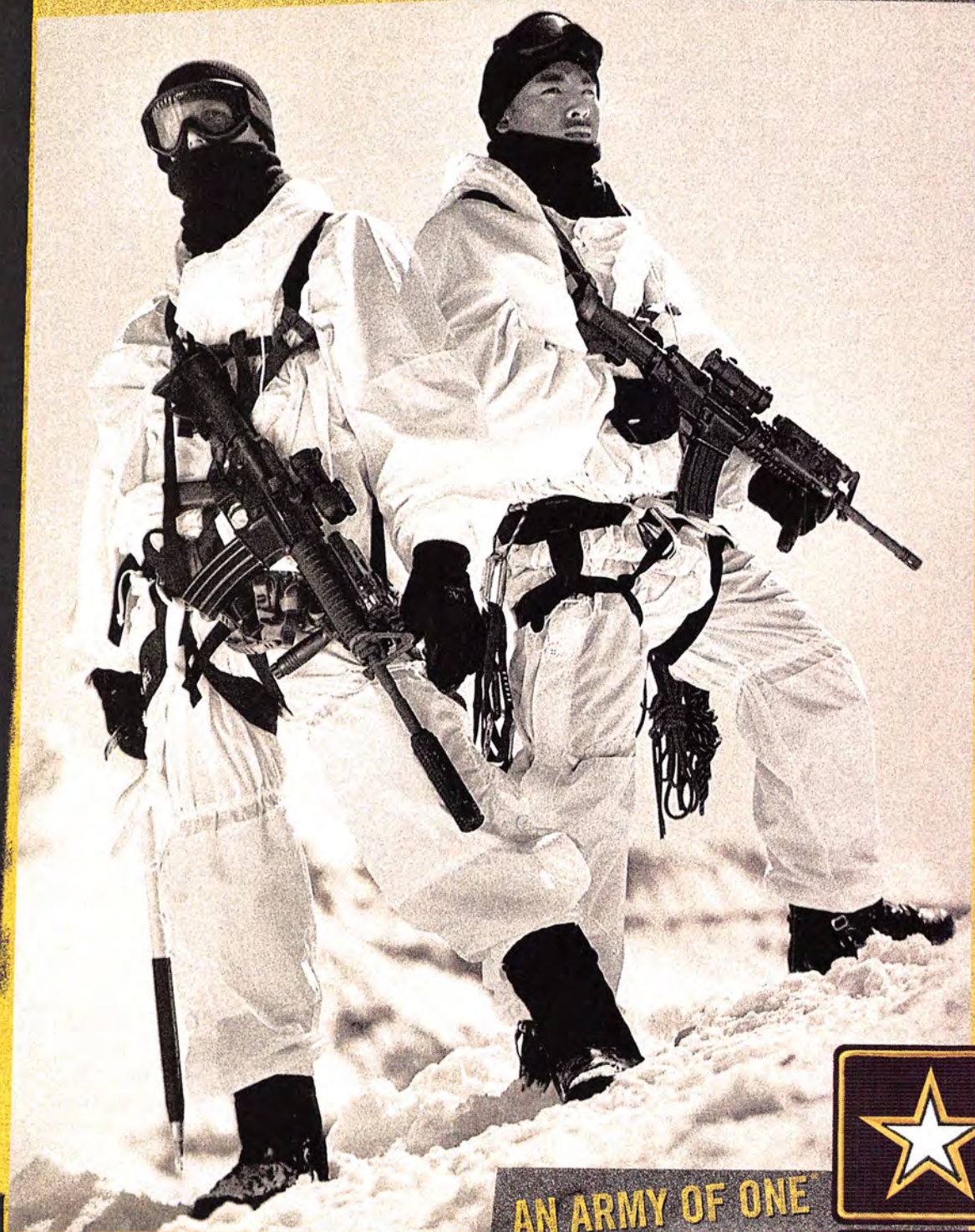
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